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(Hansard)**

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Wednesday 20 March 2013

Mercredi 20 mars 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 mars 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NON-PROFIT HOUSING
CO-OPERATIVES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT
SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 6, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 14, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Pembroke–Nipissing—do I have it right?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Good enough for me. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

That's quite a load my colleague is bringing in here—she must be signing a lot of letters on my behalf.

Speaker, before the break the other day, I finished up the debate here. So if I try to remember where I left off, that would be impossible. But I want to welcome folks from the co-operative housing association—Harvey Cooper and others. They're faithful people. You know, I was looking out there while the prayer was going on and I thought, "Oh, you know, they're not going to come to see the last eight minutes of my speech." I cannot tell you how overjoyed I was when I saw them coming up there and taking their seats in the gallery. I thought, "They have not abandoned me."

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They have not abandoned me. And, let me tell you, the folks here in the Legislature have not abandoned you either.

Again, I want to talk about what a great job my colleague from the great riding of Leeds–Grenville—it's not the greatest riding. It's up there. It's not near as good as Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, but it is a good riding. I want to thank him for the great work he's done on this.

Basically what the bill amounts to is it gives the opportunity to take these disputes between landlords and tenants to the Landlord and Tenant Board, as opposed to running them through the courts. Anybody who has ever been in the court system, in a litigative situation—my goodness gracious, let me tell you, it's not cheap. And many times it's not productive. I'm not here to castigate lawyers by any means, Mr. Speaker, but if the way you earn your money is by the amount of time you spend in a courtroom, there's a great incentive to spend a lot of time in a courtroom and have those billing hours go up.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I've been on the paying side of that, too, so I do—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You've got some experience there with that?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, yes, I have. A thank you to the member from Halton.

Again, when I was in this chamber last and we were talking about this bill, there was a whole lot less talk about the actual bill, the co-operative housing issue, which is very specific to a narrow sector, and that is co-operatively owned housing, which is not the same as affordable housing, not the same as regular rental housing where you have an agreement with the landlord or a large corporation that owns an amount of properties. These are co-operative corporations, so it's a unique niche in the market, and this bill was specifically designed to help that sector deal with disputes between the two parties. If you're in the rental business, you've got landlords and you've got tenants; and we've got a better way, we believe, of dealing with that.

Is the bill perfect? By no means. I mean, right off the bat you know it was introduced by a Liberal government; there's got to be problems. It's impossible for them not to have something in a bill that will by design, I believe, create problems, because this is the way they operate.

The other thing I found, Mr. Speaker, was that there was a tremendous amount of latitude given to the speakers the other day about what they were actually speaking about, and my colleague the Attorney General—he was here, I believe—I'm sure couldn't believe that people were actually talking about this bill because that really wasn't part of the conversation.

Interestingly enough, one of the topics of the day is, of course, scandals. What people were talking about most when they were going through the debate—the new transportation minister talked mostly about affordable housing, and the members from the New Democrats talked almost exclusively about affordable housing. So they weren't talking about the bill at all, I'm sure much to the chagrin of the folks in the gallery. But the bill itself is something that I think we're all pretty much in agreement on.

But I want to talk about affordable housing for a moment, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Monique Taylor: Oh, really? Tell us all about it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the member from Hamilton Mountain, only from the point of view that there always seems to be the position by many members of this Legislature that we don't put enough money into affordable housing, both at the provincial and the federal levels.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, how much more money could we have put into affordable housing if we didn't have the eHealth scandal? A billion—one billion. Okay, somebody keep that clock ticking here.

How much more could we have put into affordable housing without this hydro plant scandal that is getting bigger, broader and deeper by the day? We found out yesterday at committee that folks from the OPA are completely contradicting the government. Even the secretary of cabinet is contradicting what the government has been saying, what ministers have said in this House—and they have refused to withdraw their statements in this House.

So I believe this is only going to get deeper and deeper and deeper, until some member of the government, preferably the Premier, takes the responsibility and says, "Enough is enough. We're going to have to accept that we are to blame." The Liberal government, the Liberal Party, the Liberal ministers, the Liberal members, the Liberal members whose seats were saved—those are the ones that are going to have to accept the blame for costing the people of Ontario—now we know—not \$40 million, not \$230 million, but hundreds and hundreds of millions. Oakville alone is in the \$600-million-and-some range.

JoAnne Butler, vice-president of the OPA, basically just said that what the minister has been saying is absolutely wrong: He has not been disclosing the facts; he has not been accurate in what he has been saying. So affordable housing: I say to the Attorney General, how much could we have put into affordable housing without these scandals? And I haven't touched on some of the other scandals that have been—

0910

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Which ones would those be?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, give me some help here, I say to the member of Halton. There are so many that I haven't got them tracked properly. Should we file them alphabetically, or should we file them on the basis of how many hundreds of millions of dollars they have cost? On

a declining scale or rising? Highest to lowest or lowest to highest? How should we file them? Because at this point, it's in the billions and billions and billions of dollars. Do you remember Carl Sagan? You know, billions and billions of stars. Well, in Ontario, it's billions and billions of dollars that have been wasted, to the chagrin of the taxpayer, who has to continue to pay for this, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I'm done? Oh my goodness. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker? Unanimous consent for 10 more minutes for the member from—

Hon. John Gerretsen: No. Never.

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

The member from Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To get back to the bill for a second, the non-profit co-op housing bill before us—which, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, should have been passed months ago, if not years ago. Unfortunately, but for prorogation, it would have been, so we're dealing with it again.

All I can say is, let's speedily get this done. We have a housing crisis. We have 70,000-odd families waiting 10 to 12 years in the GTA, and over 150,000 in Ontario waiting for affordable housing. The housing co-op movement is one of the pieces of the puzzle to answer that. We need to do everything possible—and a lot more than this bill, might I say—to make it possible to get co-ops up, running and then running well in this province.

We have unfortunately gotten out of the housing business in this province a long time ago. We have the worst record in Canada for investment in affordable housing per capita. This is a small thing, but it's a necessary thing. It's something that our friends here, who keep coming back again and again and again—their attendance record is probably better than some of our colleagues in the House. Surely to goodness we can do this simple, simple move, and that is to pass this bill as smoothly as possible. I mean, my goodness, they're not asking for much. They're just asking for what should almost be a regulatory change so that their poor housing co-ops can get on with it.

By the way, I hope this is the first start to a housing program coming from across the aisle, because we haven't seen, really, such a thing. A housing strategy would be nice, Mr. Speaker. Building affordable housing: even better. But at least let's have a template; let's have a plan. Thank you.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker, and let me just say that, obviously, we totally support this initiative, and it probably should have happened about eight years ago, when I was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Harvey Cooper and the co-op movement talked to me about this. But at that point in

time, I think there was one party in the House that couldn't quite agree to have this passed quickly at that time. They're the party sitting opposite me at this point in time. So at least they're on the right track in supporting this initiative.

You know, I listened to the member from Renfrew talk about waste in government. When I first got here in 1995, I can remember two things very vividly. One of them was the fact that Mike Harris cut social services to the people of this province by 22% at that point in time. The other thing he did—that kind of went unnoticed, because the 22% cut in welfare was a lot bigger of a story—is that he cut down every housing project that was on the books at that point in time and that was ready to go.

I know in my own community, there were at least three or four non-profit housing projects, including one co-op project, that were basically just scrapped, and the millions of dollars that were wasted at that point in time because plans had been done, property had been purchased—some of these projects were well under way etc., but the Conservative government of the day felt, “No, we do not need affordable housing.” That is a fact, and that is a reality.

So I am very pleased that, through the initiatives of the member from Leeds–Grenville—for whom I've got a lot of respect. We were both mayors at the same time back in the 1980s; I was old already at that point in time, and he the youngest mayor in Canada at the time. I think he was 22 years old, was an unemployed cartoonist at the time when he won in Brockville etc. I'm glad, through his initiative, that at least the Conservative Party is starting to go back a little bit to the party of Bill Davis and believes in affordable housing. I would like to see that same kind of positive attitude continue with respect to other housing programs that will be coming forward.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always my pleasure to stand and rise to this discussion and to see Harvey Cooper and his group here once again. I know that they've been working on this for quite some time. I believe they've been working on this initiative for 10 years. As my colleague said previous to me, we could have had this taken care of and already lessened the load on these kind folks from having to attend here and spend more of their time, if we hadn't prorogued. We would already be past this and on to other business of the province. But to say the least, we are still here. You know, it's something that we should just be moving on.

We know that all sides of the House are supporting this; we should be getting it through. We should be making sure that co-ops are sustainable in our ridings, in our hometowns, because they provide an excellent service. They make sure that we have a good community base and that those communities are working together. You see the pride in their neighbourhoods, you see the pride in their households as they work together to make sure that they are providing a safe environment for their children and families.

You know, all they're asking for is to be allowed the same venue as all other landlords and tenants are through this province, and that's to not be in the court system but to be able to be in front of the Landlord and Tenant Board. It's cost-efficient, it's time-efficient, and it's a fairer process that we're all in favour of here.

So I would like to see this bill get on. Not that I wouldn't like to see Harvey and his group here all the time, because they're always a great face to see in the House, but I'm sure they have bigger and better things to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his presentation. As he mentioned in his presentation, he had started this some time back. I don't recall exactly what he said then, so I was listening to the part that he spoke to today and very eloquently pointing out that the purpose of the bill is very productive. I think we would all recognize that in co-op housing it's very important that we find a way to deal with the challenges they face within the housing unit, being that the people who are living in the housing unit are also the owners of the housing unit. So it's not only appropriate to do it in front of the landlord and tenant protection board, but to not put it in court. To be fighting oneself in court has never been very productive, and it sure isn't for that, either. So I think the purpose of this bill has great merit: to make sure that we can make the issues that they have more expediently.

I do want to point out—and it isn't in the bill—that we need the ability to put these through the landlord and tenant protection board in an expedient way. Because the things I hear from all the people who use that board—I hear that it takes too long, that we can't get things through that. So if we add more to it, then obviously we have to make sure that the capabilities of the board are increased so we don't see it slowing everything else down in the province, that in fact we can make the system work better, not drag it down to not getting anybody's job done. We hope that will be done, that the government will see fit to do that.

I want to thank, again, our member from Nipissing–Pembroke for explaining what is in it and what needs to be done. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Parkdale–High Park, the Attorney General, the member from Hamilton Mountain and the member from Oxford for their comments.

0920

One of the things I didn't get a chance to talk about, and one of the things we have some concern about, is waiving the fee for the application. The member from Oxford talked specifically about if we make this more accessible, the likelihood is that you're going to have more people looking for access to it. Waiving the fee will actually encourage people to apply, and because they

don't have to put any money up front, perhaps they might apply based on a case they know they can't win. The current situation, where if you win, if you're successful, then you recoup your fees makes more sense, because it will discourage frivolous cases from being brought forward to the board. And the board is going to be challenged, because it is going to have more cases coming to it as a result of the changes.

But again I do want to say, and I want to comment to the Attorney General, who wanted to go back to the 1990s: I'll tell you, folks, people remember the 1990s. They remember the government before Mike Rae that set the table for the mess—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Bob Rae.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —Bob Rae—the David Peterson government that set the table for the mess. That was the worst government in the history of Canada—the David Peterson government. It made such a mess of it that the Rae government was faced with a terrible mess and they made it greater. But I'll tell you, in 1995 there came along a person, Mike Harris, who said, "This has to be fixed. Ontario cannot continue on this trail, cannot continue on this path." He had the guts and the intestinal fortitude to make the tough decisions. This government over there does not have any guts. They will sidle up to anybody who's going to keep them in power. That is what is going to be the downfall of this province financially—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: —the failure of this government to stand up and take tough decisions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to remind the member from Renfrew that when I say "thank you" he's done, and he also sits down when I stand up. Thank you. That won't happen again. Thank you.

Further debate? The member from Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: As always, it's an honour to rise and speak on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Davenport. I would like to extend to everybody a happy first day of spring, and remember that it's the equinox, which is a day of perfection—half darkness, half light—full balance, which I think we perhaps don't see enough of here in this Parliament. Certainly in recent years, you know, the forces of darkness have been too strong, and we've seen those forces cutting taxes, cutting our programs and so forth, and I think we need to restore some balance here.

For viewers at home, I'm here to speak to Bill 14, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act. For members in the gallery today, I'll tell you a little bit about that act so you know what we're discussing here today.

Bill 14 will make the co-op housing sector dispute process a little bit fairer and a little bit more affordable for co-ops and tenants. Bill 14 amends the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act to move certain co-op tenant disputes like arrears, late rent payments and wilful damage away from the courts and to

the Landlord and Tenant Board. Disputes that are not provided for under the Residential Tenancies Act—for example, violations of no-pet provisions, failure to fulfill co-op duties or member disputes with the provider over charges or maintenance—will continue to go through the courts, and there would be no appeal of decisions made by co-op boards unless expressly permitted in co-op bylaws.

Bill 14, which, as my colleague has pointed out was originally introduced as Bill 65 in the last Legislature, includes one substantive addition: an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act that would authorize the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive or defer fees it charges to low-income Ontarians, as is currently allowed in other courts and tribunals.

Speaker, New Democrats continue to welcome this bill and this new amendment that will provide tenants with more affordable access to the Landlord and Tenant Board. But we also want to be clear that a lot more needs to be done to protect tenants' rights and their access to justice, and a lot more needs to be done to actually address the housing crisis in our province.

This bill hits close to home for me for many reasons. In the past I've had the good fortune to live in co-operative housing, and I feel extraordinarily lucky that I have a parent who, after many years on the waiting list, is in co-operative housing.

I was having a conversation in the lobby with the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. He asked me how it actually works in co-operative housing; are they well managed? I said my experience has been incredible. Tenants in co-operative housing take responsibility for their shared living experience. I certainly paid market rent when I was there, as my mom does as well. But that living arrangement provides them vibrant living and a place where people, in my experience, are very, very fortunate to live.

Speaker, this bill is also close to my heart, though, because it's part of a larger discussion that's long overdue. It has been mentioned here, but unfortunately, we have not seen enough action. That is the issue of increased cost of living in Ontario and the lack of affordable housing options for too many Ontario families. As we know, this lack of affordable housing connects to and compounds other stresses and inequalities that too many families face every day in Ontario.

Before I had this job, I worked for many years in some of the most difficult shelters, I would say, in this city. I remember, as I was doing social work school, going to see tent city down by the waterfront. I remember meeting Cathy Crowe, who's a street nurse, and listening to her words about what she called, in 2001, a national disaster on homelessness. Speaker, it strikes me that that crisis has not gone away. Unfortunately, it's something that we've gotten all too used to in this city, but it's something that must be addressed, and it has to be addressed here in this Legislature.

In our city of Toronto, we have shelters that are running at full capacity. People are again choosing to sleep

outside because they would rather be outside than be in shelters, which don't feel safe to people, which are struggling to deal with bedbug issues and a lot of other issues. At the end of the day shelters are not a replacement for affordable housing.

I've seen the housing crisis up front in the most crude and upsetting ways for very, very low-income people. But I've also seen it for many of my constituents who might not appear to be struggling. They are seniors. They are students. They are everyday working folks. For those folks, life is becoming more uncertain, more expensive, more stressful and more precarious.

The recent report card from Ontario's Campaign 2000 stated that, on average, Ontario's highest-income earners make 12½ times more than the lowest-income earners in Ontario. This points to a fact that we know, which is that income inequality has grown worse for this generation. For low-income children and families, the hope and stability that their parents experienced they will not experience.

Housing in Ontario is becoming less and less affordable for low- and modest-income Ontarians. A recent report called *Falling Behind* found that Ontario has the highest cost of housing in any province. In 2009, Ontario spent \$64 per capita on affordable housing, which is only half of the average of other Canadian provinces. Meanwhile, taking the necessary steps to build secure affordable housing, to make sure people can put food on the table, to reduce poverty—these issues unfortunately have taken a back seat in Ontario to other political dramas right here in this building. Meanwhile, life continues to grow more difficult for the majority of people in Ontario.

In this province, waiting lists for social housing have swelled to over 157,000 households. This is a 26% increase since 2007. One in five renters pay more than 50% of their income on rent in Ontario, which we know puts them at risk of homelessness. With a growing number of jobs that are contract jobs, that are part-time, that are short-term or casual, with a minimum wage that has not kept up with inflation, that is not livable, there are few certainties that rent money will be there for renters the following month.

Just last month, I was at the release of the United Way report on precarious employment and household well-being, and I had a chance to speak to folks there. The findings from that report are absolutely shocking. Barely half of the people in the greater Toronto area are in permanent full-time jobs. Let me say that again: Half of the people in the GTA have secure jobs. They don't have jobs that are full-time, that provide benefits or have any degree of employment security. Precarious employment has increased by nearly 50% in the last 20 years, and it continues to do so.

0930

Maybe some of our colleagues in this Legislature think that's a good idea, but I believe that this lack of stability and security is taking a toll on people's mental health. It's taking a toll on our families, on our communities, on our social cohesion, on our productivity and on

the well-being of our province. Speaker, I would argue that this is very real and that the effects are well documented. Clearly, the cost of shelter in Ontario is increasing this instability. This instability is decreasing people's ability to pay the rent and to feed their kids.

Early in the month, the United Nations put out a report on the right to food. It noted that the increased cost of housing is impeding the ability of people on social assistance to access a well-balanced, healthy diet. I think it should be obvious that food is vital for children and for adults. It's vital for children to learn and grow, and for people to lead healthy, productive lives. Yet in this province of Ontario, food bank use has increased by 31% between 2008 and 2012. I think it's long overdue that we start to talk about food security and about the growing food bank numbers in Ontario.

I think that the numbers don't actually do it justice. I would encourage members of this Legislature to actually go down to a food bank and see what is going on there. If you've ever volunteered in a food bank or worked in a low-income community and you've seen what it's like to line up at a food bank and to wait in line and to have your neighbours in your community see you asking for a food handout in this wealthy city, you would know that the experience of getting food at a food bank is not empowering. In fact, it's dehumanizing in many ways. Yet this is the only way that people in this province who care are able to give back, it seems, because we've had a government that has abandoned the social contract to actually care for people who are struggling.

I really wish that people could put a face to this issue, because I think the numbers don't do it justice. Food banks have become an institution in this city and in this province, and they make absolutely no sense. I would much rather, instead of taking the produce that our grocery stores don't want to sell or can't sell and then having the thousands and thousands of volunteer hours to pick up that food and bring it to a food bank and then distribute it, and all the fundraising money that goes to that—heck, I'd rather just give that money out to people and let them make a choice about what they wanted to eat instead of having to go through cans to check expiry dates and check for dents. But in fact, Speaker, that's the job of this province, the job of all of us: to make sure that we have enough to pay the bills. I think that the state of food insecurity and the growing food bank use in this province is a shame. In fact, it has let this government off the hook.

This is all the reality to the background as we try to pass Bill 14, and it's a little frustrating to be here speaking about this bill again, because we've seen this bill introduced before, as Bill 65, before the Liberal government prorogued the Legislature. And while we appreciate the small amendment that this government made to the bill to increase accessibility to the Landlord and Tenant Board, we all know that this bill does not go far enough. It doesn't cover enough or address the root causes of the issues that Ontarians face every day.

We have not seen this government make affordability or affordable housing a priority. This bill is fine. It will

pass. It will go to committee. New Democrats will work there to ensure that it's fair and it's as strong as possible, given the limited scope that this government has provided to address affordable housing.

But this government does need to show more. It needs to show a real commitment to Ontario families, and it needs to start taking responsibility for its failure to act over the past decade, its failure to make life more secure and more affordable for Ontarians.

Like the Attorney General, I remember what that meant when the government previous to the Liberal government cut social assistance benefits by 22%. But it has been 15 years since then, and there has been plenty of time to make sure that people can keep food on the table. This bill is another example of how slowly this government has been moving on some of the most critical issues that we face.

Speaker, for the last nine years, since 2004, the cooperative housing sector has been lobbying the provincial government to move co-op evictions out of the courts and to use the existing infrastructure of the tribunal system used by other non-profit housing providers and private landlords. A decade later, it's time to move this forward. Let's not forget that in 2009 this government signed an all-party commitment, through the Poverty Reduction Act, to reduce poverty in Ontario, because this act has stalled, this plan has stalled and it's time to get it moving.

There are 600,000 people without work in this province, and it's time that this government do something to support those folks. It has taken 10 years just to produce a report on social assistance reform, but unfortunately a shelved report will not pay the rent or feed the kids in Ontario. It's time for this government to move forward with social assistance reform. Time is wasting. People's lives are deteriorating while they wait. We need action today to implement the best recommendations of the social assistance review.

We all know that the mess of complicated rules for social assistance recipients is well documented now, and it's time for the Premier to make these changes to allow Ontarians to put food on the table. We've put forward a piece of that, which is to start by allowing social assistance recipients who are working to keep \$200 of their earnings; don't claw that back. It's a proposal that all parties have agreed to, yet it's disappointing to see the government sit on their hands. Why can't we push that forward today? My understanding is that it's a regulation change. It could happen; it could have happened weeks ago, months ago; it could have happened 10 years ago. I hope that the Premier will take our lead, will work with us on the budget to deliver relief to Ontario families.

But to be honest, Speaker, the record of this government has been disappointing at best. In Toronto, this Premier signed off on an agreement to sell 65 housing units of public housing, and while some said this was prudent, this is not a long-term solution. Selling off capital assets to pay for repairs is not a long-term solution, and it speaks to the real crisis in this province.

Speaker, we've put forward many proposals, as New Democrats, that we would like to see, proposals that

would protect low-income tenants. We proposed ways to make it easier for tenants to have their concerns heard at the Landlord and Tenant Board; for example, increasing the time limit for tenant complaints to the Landlord and Tenant Board to two years after the alleged conduct. That would match the time limitation for landlords. There needs to be a discussion of other ways to better protect tenants through strengthening rent control.

Our party advocates for an inclusionary housing policy in this province that would require developers to ensure a small percentage of affordable housing units in new developments. My colleague from Parkdale-High Park has been a tireless advocate on this issue, pushing this issue to the forefront of our discussions in this Legislature. This government, however, has failed to act. It has failed to put in place inclusionary zoning policies that would allow municipalities to require developers to include a minimum number of affordable housing units in new developments. For those who remain reluctant to spend a dime to build affordable housing, this is a cost-free way to build housing that would support thousands of people in this province. Speaker, there are a growing number of municipalities that see inclusionary zoning housing as a key planning tool to generate more affordable housing and more affordable neighbourhoods.

New Democrats have also proposed a simple amendment to the Planning Act that would ensure that section 37 money would actually support affordable housing growth. This would also lead to the creation of more new housing co-ops, in addition to other forms of more affordable housing. We know that inclusionary housing won't replace direct housing investment from the province, but it will be an important new tool to help Ontarians find more affordable homes and to keep them. We do, however, need direct housing investment, because affordable housing remains the biggest challenge for many people in this province. The long affordable housing wait-lists and the long lines at food banks are the most crude evidence of this big affordability gap.

Speaker, we also proposed a housing benefit that, properly designed, would help stabilize precariously housed renters and households and would be an effective homeless prevention strategy. The government talked about exploring this benefit—it was something that we prioritized in our 2011 election platform—but this government has taken no visible action to move this forward. Now is the time for the government to step up to the plate and deliver on this benefit.

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Finally, we need a strong guiding document to bring all of these achievable ideas together. Ontario needs a housing plan, and needs a housing plan with targets, with timelines and funding for programs. This government promised such a plan three years ago when it launched its long-term affordable housing plan consultations. While the government has put forward a long-term housing plan, it has not set any targets for the creation of affordable housing or any long-term commitment of dollars. Speaker, we need targets, we need timelines and we need

a funding commitment to effectively tackle the housing crisis that our province is facing.

I think that the issue of responsibility is important. I think that this building is too far away, even though it's just blocks, from people who are struggling to pay the rent. It's just blocks from people who are living on the streets. Somehow, members of this Legislature fail to take responsibility to actually secure the right to housing in this city and in this province.

It's sad to say, but there's a lack of leadership on housing issues from this government. In 2009, the Ontario Auditor General highlighted the lack of access to social housing in this province. He noted the lack of ministry staff resources to deliver housing programs, and he noted the lack of proper asset management. He also noted the lack of a provincial strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of sufficient numbers of well-maintained social housing units.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There are a few sidebars going on. In fact, there are some people who are talking from five or 10 seats away to each other. If you want to have discussions, I'd appreciate it if you'd take it outside. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Speaker, as recently as 2012, the Drummond commission raised the issue and said the province needs to both accept its responsibility to work with municipal housing service managers and affordable housing providers to stabilize funding, and the province also needs to aggressively negotiate to get the federal government back to the table.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stop here and listen to the rest of the debate.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me just, first of all, say that I admire anyone who is involved in the social work field. My own daughter has been a social worker with the children's aid society for some 10 years, and now she works in palliative and complex continuing care in the Kingston area. I think social workers do a tremendous amount of good work in this province, and some of them do great work within this Legislature as well.

Now, the member has talked about everything under the sun as far as housing is concerned, and I think he put his finger right on it right at the very end. All successful social housing projects over the last 50 years in this country have been as a result of the co-operation and working together of all three orders of government: local, federal and provincial. As a matter of fact, the last major housing initiative that we had in this province was some five or six years ago, when about \$600 million was put together between both the federal government and the provincial government—all of our tax dollars; we all contributed to it in one way or another—and we did build a significant number of new affordable housing units.

One of the problems with affordable housing is the fact that it means so many different things to so many different people. At the one end, we get money for shel-

ters, we get money for non-profits, we get money for co-ops. At the other end, we get money that helps young couples, for example, buy their first house. To many different people, some of this is regarded as affordable housing, and to some people it isn't regarded as affordable housing. That's one issue that we have out there. There's no question about it that people have a right to decent and affordable housing.

I would just urge the party opposite who have great contact with the federal government to get the federal government re-engaged in the whole issue of affordable housing. If the feds are willing to put up our tax dollars through the federal initiative, we will do so from the provincial side, because we realize it's absolutely necessary that people live in safe, good, clean housing. Everybody should have the right to that in this great country of ours and this great province of ours. All we can do is work together to make this a reality, particularly for the most vulnerable in our society.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'm proud today to speak in favour of this bill. It's a very worthwhile cause. People who need not-for-profit housing—there are unfortunately so many of them in our community, and we have an obligation as a moral society to help these people.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to remind the official opposition that your member is up talking, and five of you are talking in front of him. I'm having trouble hearing, especially the member from Halton. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, again, I support this bill. We, as a party, support this bill. We look forward to working with the Liberals and the NDP to do what's right in this case and help people in Ontario who have a need.

Harvey Cooper, who is here with us today, has been in to my office and spoken to me and explained the problems in more detail than I understood before. So I thank him for that. I understand, I accept and I'm more aware of the breadth and depth of the problem.

We need to be doing more for people who are poor, who are having a difficult time. We need to have more of our assets, our monies, in this province to help these people. We're wasting too much money on things like scandals, other non-priority items—well, a scandal's hardly a priority item—and need to focus on what's important.

The change for this to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board is a very good and worthwhile thing. We are concerned that it might create a very big backlog, which will be bad for tenants and landlords, so we look forward, in committee, to discussing what needs to be done to amend this bill to do the job more effectively. It's not right for tenants or landlords to face big backlogs of time when they deserve timely and just decisions.

We will be supporting it. We look forward to discussing it in committee and making it even better.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm happy to stand up and respond to some of the comments that were raised by the member from Davenport.

But first I'd like to address some of the comments that were made by the former Attorney General—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Former?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: No, current Attorney General—I'm sorry—current Attorney General, who I have a tremendous amount of respect for.

But one thing that I cannot stand, when we are sitting in this chamber, when we are engaging in discussion, is jurisdictional politics. I cannot stand it; I have no tolerance for it. I think the people of my riding have no tolerance for governments that try to pass the buck. The fact is that we have a responsibility here in this Legislature, and there is a lot that is within our control, there is a lot that we can do. I don't even like to hear about the federal government, and how we need to lobby the federal government. We need to focus on what we can do right here right now.

So I wanted to speak about some of the issues that were raised by my colleague the member from Davenport and some of the points that I agree with. We've seen it before. We were debating this act or this bill or one that was very close to it, very similar to it, before we prorogued, and all that work was lost. That is a shame. So is the fact that this bill doesn't do anything to help the people in my riding, where we don't have any co-ops.

This bill does not go far enough and it does not address the underlying issues that we see. Underlying issues like: affordable housing; we need to have supports for our municipalities to create more affordable housing, to maintain the existing affordable housing units that they have; we need to have a housing plan with targets and timelines; and in the north, we need affordable hydro; it is not right that people can live in subsidized housing units where they pay \$85 a month but have a \$1,000 hydro bill; and we need affordable food.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Davenport for his comments.

I think that our friends from the co-op sector who are here today are probably encouraged to hear there's going to be support from all three parties for this particular piece of legislation, and I'm sure they're encouraged by that.

Speaker, earlier, in his response to the member from Nipissing—sorry, not Nipissing; Pembroke, I believe—our Attorney General was speaking, and he referenced some decisions that had been made some time ago. I worked in the social housing field for 15 years in Thunder Bay, both the north side of the city and the south side of the city. My geography encompassed—going up to the northeast: Geraldton, Nakina and Aroland and Longlac—quite a wide bit geography. I remember very clearly as well—and all governments make decisions, but I think

the decisions that were made in 1995 were particularly egregious insofar as they disproportionately affected, I think, people who could least afford to be affected in the way that they were as a result of those decisions.

As the AG has said earlier in his remarks, there were projects on the books: contracts had been signed; documents had been prepared; drawings had been prepared. I had a number of non-profit projects in my jurisdiction that would have been coming online that were just simply put to the side, and they didn't go forward. A lot of money was wasted, and a large vacuum, to be fair, was created. We fell behind in a significant way.

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Other members don't want to reference the need for support from the federal government, but I can tell you, it is much more difficult, when you're responsible for the money side of things, to get everything done that you want to get done without support from the feds. We saw it four or five years ago when they walked away on the child care money. We've been supporting that with an extra \$63 million a year for four years now; that's \$250 million.

We're concerned with whether or not they're going to stay connected on the social housing field at the end of this agreement. I think 2014 is when it ends. Without their support, it is obviously much more difficult for us, as a government in Ontario, to do as much as we would like to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jonah Schein: It is good to hear the support for this bill. It is an important bill, as we know, and it's good to hear that support from across the House. But we've also heard from most members that we have a crisis of affordable housing that far exceeds the limits of this bill.

I would ask this government, which has had 10 years to do this, to actually introduce some more substantial legislation that would make life more affordable for people, that would deal with some of the concerns experienced by folks in northern communities, as my friend from Kenora—Rainy River was saying, and would make sure that people in this city can afford to live here.

Speaker, I'm thrilled to hear the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills speak in support of this. We need Conservative support in this House for affordable housing. We need Liberal support. We can count on NDP support for affordability issues.

But I think the language of “the needy,” “the others”—we need an understanding in this Legislature that all of us, at some point in our lives, will need support, need help, and that the kind of province that we need to build is one where we can count on each other to help each other out when we are vulnerable. It's not about those other people. It's about our sisters and brothers. It's about our mothers and fathers and our children.

It's mostly a matter of luck whether we're going to be able to make it in this world. But what we do have control of is, in this Legislature, we can introduce policies

that will protect people. We can create affordable housing in Ontario. It would be nice to have the support of the federal government, but this provincial government can and should take the lead. We want to work with this government to make sure that people can afford to live in Ontario.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on a very important bill, Bill 14, that deals with non-profit housing co-operatives and makes some very important changes.

I will say at the outset that it's about time that we're debating this particular bill. I think we've heard from all three parties how important this particular issue is. We've been hearing from our friends from the co-operative housing sector, who have highlighted to all us members how important this particular—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, it appears that what I just said over there is happening over here. Your speaker is up, we have two lovely discussions going on in front, and I can't hear him. I would suggest we take it outside if you want to have some giggles and things. Thanks.

Go ahead, Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. As I was stating earlier, the co-operative housing sector has done a very good job of highlighting some of the challenges that exist in the current system as it relates to dispute resolution mechanisms within the co-op housing sector. These changes that are being put forward through Bill 14 will ensure that we have a far more workable dispute resolution mechanism by which co-ops will be able to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board as opposed to going to the courts to resolve certain kinds of disputes within their mandate.

As we know, tribunals like the Landlord and Tenant Board, which are specialized tribunals which have been given very specific mandates and have the expertise in dealing with these types of issues, are far better suited to deal with these matters than the courts, not to mention the fact that the Landlord and Tenant Board, or LTB, is far more specialized in nature. They have the expertise to look at these issues. The proceedings are far cheaper than going to the courts, and they are, from a timeline point of view, perhaps far more expedited as well.

We know the challenges with the courts. Courts are busy. They deal with all kinds of issues. For co-ops to be able to go to the courts, not only is there that added expense of going to the court system, but then there's also the issue around the time, as to how long it takes to resolve these disputes, in terms of getting them heard and getting a decision from a judge. And there may be issues around expertise—not to undermine judges; they are very knowledgeable, but because they deal with so many different types of issues, they would not have very specific expertise like the Landlord and Tenant Board, which is a more specialized tribunal created under law

through the Residential Tenancies Act. So this point that the co-op housing sector has been advocating for some time, that we move most co-op tenure disputes from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board, is a very reasonable thing to do. I think it will result in a better system in place that will help resolve disputes much faster, in a manner that is cheaper and hopefully will result in decisions that are better decisions as well, both for the co-ops and those who live within co-ops. I think this is the right move.

I'm really happy that this bill is tabled so early on in the session so that it gives us the opportunity to have proper debate here, at the committee and, of course, third reading, so that we can pass this into law as quickly as possible.

The timing for this bill is quite appropriate as well. As we probably all know, 2012 was the International Year of Cooperatives, declared by the United Nations, around the world, and I can tell you that at least in my community of Ottawa Centre, in my city of Ottawa, we had some incredible celebrations that took place during that year of co-ops. I think I learned far more about the co-op movement, what co-ops stand for and the manner in which they help people in all sectors, not just in housing. It was really incredible to have that year. I think it was really fitting to shine the light on co-operatives in our communities and highlight the good work that they do day in and day out.

What really amazed me is how little the general public knows about co-ops. They are very much part and parcel of our lives. We see them all the time, from credit unions to, obviously, housing co-ops. But I find in my conversations in my community that it's something people have very little appreciation of, in the sense that they don't know much about them. That's interesting, given the history of co-ops and how long they have existed in our society, in our community.

I think that the United Nations declaring 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives really helped move the yardstick in making people aware—at least, obviously, I can speak for Ontario—in our province of what co-ops are, what they do, what their mandate is and how they are really helping to foster a more just and fair society.

Speaker, I think I've mentioned this in the House before: I belong to a renewable energy co-op in my community. It's the first of its kind in eastern Ontario, where a co-operative has been created to promote more renewable energy. They've got a few projects on the go. I'm very proud to be a member. I just marvel at the way the decisions are made in that co-op, how everybody's views are taken into account and how that co-op is really taking the necessary steps in promoting renewable energy, and obviously they are doing that through the Green Energy Act, through the FIT and microFIT programs. It's amazing how many people are interested, how many people are contributing—people like myself who are not able to take advantage of the microFIT program because of the way my roof is designed or facing.

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But here's a co-op which is giving an opportunity for people to put in smaller amounts of money and be able to take part in a very large movement in greening our environment and making sure that we're generating electricity in a renewable fashion. It's just one very specific example of how co-operatives are making a difference in all different sectors in our communities, and mine in particular is definitely a shining example of that.

Coming back to co-op housing, I wanted to talk about the work that the Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario, CHASEO, does in my community. It's a co-operation of co-ops, an extremely vibrant organization which does some really good work in my community and across eastern Ontario.

CHASEO represents about 43 housing co-ops, plus five associate co-ops, providing units for 4,345 households in eastern Ontario. That translates into affordable housing for 12,100 people. That's a very significant number of people that they provide affordable housing to. There are five French-speaking and seven bilingual co-ops in eastern Ontario that are represented by CHASEO. There are 360 accessible units available in eastern Ontario housing co-ops, making sure, of course, that people of all abilities have access to good, affordable housing. Also, very importantly, I think, there are five seniors' co-ops in eastern Ontario that are represented through CHASEO.

CHASEO is a marvellous organization. I've had great opportunities to work with them on many issues. This particular issue, Bill 14, is one key issue that they have raised with me on numerous occasions. On a regular basis, I attend their spring congress and AGM and their fall education day, and I have had the opportunity to speak at both those events on an annual basis.

The issue around a better dispute settlement mechanism, the one that is sort of encapsulated in Bill 14, comes up often. I'm really happy to see that this bill is moving forward and has the support of all three parties, because I look forward to going back again to the meetings coming up and being able to deliver that good news to them, saying, "Look, your legislators listened to you, and by working together, they were able to deliver on something that is extremely important to you." I think that really highlights our work, which is to help people. It really translates into those who live in co-op housing and will be able to assist them in a very meaningful way.

I want to mention the names of the board members who are part of CHASEO, because it's such an engaged organization in my community. It does so much in promoting co-op housing and providing necessary services to co-op housing. A big thank-you to the president, Angie Blais; the secretary, Helen Friel; staff liaison Catherine Lee; and Vice-President Daniel Monoogian. Their interim director is Sharon Virtue, their treasurer is Michelle Bainbridge, and their director is Flo Bernier. Of course, their executive director is Céline Carrière, who works very, very hard. The board of directors and the CHASEO staff work extremely hard in making sure that they're providing services to all the housing co-ops.

In my riding, in Ottawa Centre alone—very fortunately, I think—I have 12 housing co-ops. I've had the chance to visit every single one of them. They are great places for people to live. A lot of good work, a lot of good initiatives come out of all those housing co-ops. Most of them are concentrated in the downtown part of my community, but then, if you really look at the map, you will see them on the south end of my riding, close to where I live, and to the west end and east end as well.

It's incredible, the diversity of these co-ops and the kinds of different projects that they take on. So let me go through the list, because I think it's instructive, and I'll speak to a few of them because I've had the chance to work with some of them.

There's the Abiwin Housing Co-operative, which is located right downtown, actually not that far from my community office. A very vibrant community.

Alex Laidlaw Housing Co-operative is located on Booth Street.

Cartier Square Housing Co-operative is on Cooper.

The Catalpa Housing Co-operative is on Queen Elizabeth Drive—beautiful. It's right on the Rideau Canal. It is a series of row houses which have been turned into a co-operative. I was there last summer talking to some of the neighbours. Just absolutely gorgeous architecture, almost turn of the century, and the fact that they have this beautiful view of the Rideau Canal, which is a UNESCO world heritage site, as we all know, is remarkable.

Then there is the Coopérative d'habitation d'app. Desjardins, on Empress Avenue, which is a French senior co-op located in my community. A fantastic group of people—I've done some work with them. They had some challenges, actually, which could have been far better resolved had Bill 14 existed than resorting to court systems, so I know they will be particularly happy with Bill 14. Now, I think things are far better and smoother at the Desjardins co-op, but a direct example that I think they would have been far better served if we had on the books something like Bill 14 already passed.

Dalhousie Housing Co-op is, again, on Somerset Street.

Located in the community of Glebe—many of you know where Glebe is located in my riding—we have the Glebe Housing Co-operative.

Then there is the Shefford Heritage Housing Co-operative on 300 Cooper. Just last summer they celebrated their 100th anniversary—the 100th anniversary of this beautiful architecture. This building is to be marveled at. If you come to Ottawa, if you're in my riding, I will encourage you to please go to Cooper Street and just stand outside the Shefford Heritage Housing Co-op and have a look at this building. It is absolutely gorgeous architecture, and inside the building is beautiful.

The story is incredible. It was in the 1990s that the building was owned by a landlord. It was just falling apart; it was not being maintained. A group of people got together and said, "You know what? We want to take this building, we want to turn this into a co-op, and we want to fix this building and make it into a quality place to

live.” They did so, and the provincial government at that time came to their aid in making that happen. They have restored the building, outside and inside.

I had the chance this summer, when they were celebrating the 100th anniversary of the building, to see some of the units, to see the beautiful staircase, the banisters, the artwork that’s hanging in the hallways and, like I said, the architecture outside. It is probably one of my favourite buildings in my riding, and again, hats off to the members of the co-op at Shefford for the work they do day in and day out in maintaining this building and the incredible work they’re doing in building a vibrant community.

Again, just last summer we had a great celebration outdoors. It was kind of a rainy day—rainy, sunny, it was one of those weird days, but you know, people were out. There was music and there was poetry. There was a bit of storytelling, a bit of recalling the history. I think some of our friends who are visiting right now in the gallery were there for that opening. So that was fantastic.

Then there’s the Tompkins Housing Co-operative, which is located on Preston Street in Little Italy, another very vibrant part of my riding.

The Carillon Co-op is literally probably 10 doors down from where I live on Prince of Wales Drive in my riding, another very nice community.

On the west end of my community there’s the Dovercourt Co-op and the Westboro Housing Co-operative.

All this to say, Speaker, that I have the great privilege of representing a community where co-op housing is very important, and this issue that we’re debating in Bill 14 is extremely important in all of these co-operatives. I’ve visited them all. I’ve had the chance to speak to people. I’ve been working closely with CHASEO, the Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario, and again and again and again the issue that has come up is, let’s make the dispute resolution process a simpler one. The way it is structured right now makes it extremely difficult for co-ops to conduct their affairs. Courts are costly. The dispute resolution process that takes place in courts is far lengthier in time, and decisions may not be that of a specialist body like the Landlord and Tenant Board.

I think the change that we’re making, I can tell you, will see a very direct impact in my community, in all the 12 co-ops—co-op housing—that are located in the riding of Ottawa Centre. In every single one of them, I know these changes are very much appreciated because it is going to allow the members of the co-operative to manage their affairs in a far more reasonable manner than what we have in place.

So I’m very appreciative that this bill has come forward. I know it has been a few times that it has been here, but I feel fairly confident this time around that this will pass this Legislature and will be law, hopefully as soon as we all can do.

I think the most important message that we’re sending out is that as the members of this Legislature, as duly elected representatives, regardless of which part of the province we come from, regardless of the political ideol-

ogy or value sets that we belong to, we are listening as a collective. We are paying attention to issues that are important in our communities. We are taking very direct steps that will help ensure that lives are being improved in places like co-op housing.

I think this bill may be simpler in many regards or may not deal with the big heavy policy issues that we all engage in and debate at all times. I would argue, Speaker, that it’s still as valid, as important, for those whose lives it’s going to impact. I think that is our job, as members of this Legislature: to listen to our communities, to be there at that street level, be able to go door to door, talk to folks and see what those issues are, and be able to then translate that in work that is going to improve their lives. I have heard many times from folks who have talked about this issue, and I look forward to the passage of this legislation so that I can go back to them and say, “We listened. All three parties listened. We worked together, and we got it done in a co-operative fashion.”

Speaker, I look forward to hearing the views of other members, but I just wanted to take this opportunity to assert my support for this bill and, of course, talk about some of the great co-operative housing in my community and how it’s going to impact their lives and improve them.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Liz Sandals: I’m delighted that we have with us today members from the Ontario Principals’ Council in the gallery here and, I suspect, in other places. I’d like to introduce Ken Arnott from the York Region District School Board, who is the president of OPC. Other board members are Bob Pratt, from Delta Secondary School in Hamilton, in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board; Sharon Bowes, from Kerns Public School in Thornloe, in the Ontario northeast district school board; John Hamilton, from the Sutherland Public School in Sunderland, in the Durham board; Susan Ferguson, from the North Lambton Secondary School in Forest, in the Lambton Kent board; Mary Linton Brady, from the Milliken Public School in Toronto, in the Toronto DSB, obviously; Lisa Vincent, from Hastings-Prince Edward DSB; Naeem Siddiq, from North Albion Collegiate in Toronto, again the Toronto DSB; Sandra Stewart, from Avalon Public School in Orléans, in the Ottawa-Carleton DSB; and finally, Ian McFarlane, who is the executive director of OPC. We’re very pleased to the principals with us here today.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I’m proud to introduce Bernard Tangelder, from the great riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Bernard is with TD Research, and he’s here to spend the day at Queen’s Park.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to introduce Dmitri Logounov, who is a small business owner from Don Valley West joining us today.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to introduce Helen Musclow, a resident of Cambridge and a distinguished volunteer for Victim Services of Waterloo Region, who is here in the gallery today. She has an extensive biography; I know I can't read it all into the record. I appreciate her being here.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce two constituents of mine from Orillia: Deb Wagner and Dawson Pasiecznik. They're here today.

I'd also like to welcome the Ontario Principals' Council as well. We had a great meeting this morning.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome a constituent and hard-working student placement in my office, Noah Adams, to the Legislature.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm delighted today to introduce Julie Rosenberg. She's the mother of a page in this session, Emily Kostiuk—I hope I got that name right. Of course, Julie and Emily are from the great riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville. Please welcome them.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce the hardest-working city councillor from the city of North Bay, Mr. Mac Bain.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'd like to welcome visiting members of the Ontario Principals' Council: Naeem Siddiq, Sandra Stewart, Sharon Bowes, Lisa Vincent, Peggy Sweeney, Laura Hyde; Ian McFarlane, the executive director; and of course, Ken Arnott, president. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to welcome Marilyn Savage, from London, who is here on behalf of her 93-year-old parents, Everett and Simone Price, who have separated by the long-term-care system after 67 years of marriage and are seeking reunification from the government.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I too would like to welcome Helen Musclow this morning. Helen is not only a dedicated volunteer with Victim Services of Waterloo Region, but she has also volunteered with Relay for Life and the MS Society. Volunteerism is her life. It's a pleasure to welcome her to Queen's Park today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): In the Speaker's gallery, please welcome Mr. Alvin Curling, former Speaker in the 38th Parliament and member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough North and Scarborough–Rouge River.

We'd also like to welcome the students with Mr. Curling, who are from Seneca College.

yesterday that I barely know where to begin. We heard from cabinet secretary Peter Wallace. He testified that on July 27, 2011, cabinet was made aware of Project Vapour, the code name for the Oakville gas plant cancellation.

Premier, you were part of that cabinet and there at the time of those mini briefings. A year later you stood in this Legislature and said all the documents were released, yet you knew full well at that time that we had no Project Vapour documents. So what's your answer today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just before I answer—and I'm happy to answer the question—I just want to remind everyone that the UN has said that this is International Day of Happiness. So we're just going to have a happy day in here.

Peter Wallace also said yesterday, "I'm satisfied that the Ministry of Energy responded to the request in good faith and worked appropriately to provide the documents requested by the committee." So my contention is that all that has been asked for has been provided.

What we've done is we've expanded the mandate of the committee. We've allowed for a much broader range of questioning, and that will allow all of the questions of the opposition to be answered. So I'm very pleased that this process is under way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, on September 25, you stood in this House and said, "The total cost of the Oakville relocation is \$40 million." Now your energy minister says the OPA gave you that number and it could be wrong. He told us to call OPA officials to testify and "give us their calculations." Well, yesterday we did exactly that and they said to us that on September 24, "...a memorandum of understanding stated there would be other costs to the relocation in addition to the \$40 million."

Premier, you told us the total cost was \$40 million when you knew, one full day before, that was not correct. I'm sensing a pattern here, Premier, so today, what's your answer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In a news release on September 24, 2012, the OPA stated that the sunk costs for relocating the plant were \$40 million and that they took on gas management and turbine costs in exchange for a lower price for power. This was confirmed in committee yesterday as well.

The memorandum of understanding the opposition is referring to has been public and available to the opposition since September. Also, the Oakville plant contract has been online, 500 pages, since December.

We have been open and transparent throughout the entire process. That's why we asked the Auditor General to look into the costs of the Oakville relocation. The costs that the OPA spoke of yesterday have been public since September. This is not new. So let's allow the Auditor General to do his job.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. Good morning, Premier. My question is for the Premier. There was so much damning evidence at the justice committee

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, we've now heard, first from the province's top bureaucrat, that you knew one thing to be true, but the legislative record shows you said something completely opposite here. Then we heard from the Ontario Power Authority that you knew one thing to be true, but your legislative record shows again you said something completely different in this House. In your media interview yesterday, you said, "... to the best of our ability at every ... juncture we have given the information that we had."

1040

Premier, sworn testimony at the justice committee yesterday has now proven that is not the case.

Yesterday, you also said, "There may be differences with what we have said in the past."

So what's your answer today?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The OPA stated in their press release on September 24, 2012, that as part of the re-negotiated contract, the OPA took on gas management and turbine costs in exchange for a lower price paid for power.

Yesterday, this was confirmed at committee when OPA vice-president JoAnne Butler said, "In the negotiation, because we were taking on some of the gas ... management fees, because we were" taking on the gas turbines and sunk costs, "we did get a lowering of what we call the net revenue requirement or the monthly payment ... you've heard about...." This quote means that we are paying a significantly lower monthly price for power.

Mr. Speaker, again, we have asked the auditor to look into these costs. We have expanded the mandate of the committee, and the Premier has committed to going before the committee, if asked.

Let's allow the committee to do their work.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is also to the Premier. Premier, to date, your response to questions regarding the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants has been all too familiar. You've simply picked up where your predecessor left off. When faced with the consequences of your government's political interference, it's the same old McGuinty-Wynne story: You deflect, deny, defend.

As we heard from not one but two witnesses in committee yesterday, you sat at the cabinet table and were briefed on the memorandum of understanding to move the Oakville plant. Both you and your Minister of Energy were briefed that the cost of relocating the Oakville gas plant would be significantly higher than the \$40 million you've continually claimed.

Will you come clean with the people of Ontario about what you knew and when you knew it? Or do we have to wait until you're questioned under oath to finally get at the truth?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really agree with the Minister of Energy that we should let the committee do its work. The whole reason, Mr. Speaker, that we wanted to expand the mandate of the justice committee was to allow them to look at all of the issues involved in this.

From the moment I took on this job and before I took on the job, I have said that I believed that we needed to get all the questions answered, that we needed to make sure that all the documents were available. That's what this exercise is about.

I have said I will appear before the committee. I have asked the Auditor General to look at both situations. We have expanded the mandate of the committee. Far from denying, I have said there are questions that need to be answered and we want to provide the information. They're not simple questions. The answers are not simple. That's why we need all these processes in order to get the answers in place.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I would say to the member for Northumberland–Quinte West and the member for Huron–Bruce, I can hear you loudly, but I cannot hear the answer that's coming across. I would expect the party that asked the question would be the one that would be quiet to listen to the answer.

Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: Your latest strategy is very transparent. Your Minister of Energy has tried to pin your political decisions on the Ontario Power Authority. Yesterday, he claimed that, "The Ontario Power Authority did all the negotiation; they did the calculation of costs. They provided the cost to us."

Premier, we know that is not correct. As we heard in committee yesterday, political staff even interfered in the negotiations with TransCanada, by directing the OPA on what counter-offers to make to TransCanada.

I'll quote directly from OPA vice-president JoAnne Butler's written statement: "The government was a party to the negotiations ... in the relocation of both power plants. In the case of the Oakville plant, it was represented by the Ministry of Energy and by Infrastructure Ontario."

Will you instruct the Minister of Energy to correct his record and apologize for misleading this House?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Sit down, please.

I would ask the member to withdraw that statement.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we're used to hearing them listen.

I have a quote from Peter Wallace, secretary of cabinet, in his testimony, referring to whether or not there were any directions given with respect to the documents: "They had not been able to find"—his investigation by

the Attorney General's office—"any concrete evidence to substantiate the allegation, that the witness, the individual involved, appeared to be truthful, that she appeared not to have, in her own mind, offered specific and highly inappropriate direction to the power authority."

We provided the information and the documentation that were available to us. Colin Andersen, when he exposed himself to the media here several weeks ago, answered this question: "At any point during these searches—we are talking about all of them, not just this one—did you feel that you were under a great deal of political pressure to either produce or not produce records?" Colin Andersen's answer was, "No."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakubuski: Back to the Premier: I'll point out to the Premier that that memorandum of understanding was available in September. They knew about it, and withheld that until October 15, when the then Premier could scamper off and prorogue this Legislature.

Attempts to claim that the OPA is an arm's-length agency after years of political interference are ridiculous. Your government has used ministerial directives to inject politics into everything the OPA does. It's rich to claim that it's an arm's-length agency after you were caught red-handed directing it to cancel the plants. You've blamed them for the withholding of documents. You've blamed them for the siting of the Oakville and Mississauga plants. We found out in committee yesterday that it was the sole decision of your government where to site those plants.

Will you admit that you only consider the OPA an arm's-length agency when you're using it to hide behind one of your scandals?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock. Please sit down.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have said from the beginning that there were three parties who wanted the relocation of the gas plants. We decided it. We won the election. We moved the gas plants—relocated the gas plants. The Ontario Power Authority negotiated; they provided the information to us. The Ontario Power Authority—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: You asked the question, and I would expect you to be the most behaved person to get the answer.

And the rest, also, that are following him: I'd ask you to give up on it. Calm down a little.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, we had a number of witnesses yesterday. One of them was the mayor of Oakville, and he had this to say: "Anyone who wishes to criticize the cost of cancelling it would do everybody a favour if they would explain how they would have done it differently."

Can the opposition do us a favour and table the cost analysis they performed to relocate the gas plant when they promised to move it?

The OPA had on their website all of the necessary information. They had a press release, the sunk costs, they referred to the power cost deal, they had the contract online—500 pages worth—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The leader of the third party.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of Energy stood up in the House and said, "Every single time the question of cost has come up ... we relied on the information that was provided to us by the Ontario Power Authority." Does the Premier stand by that assertion?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, we are very eager—I am personally eager, our government is eager—that we make sure that every piece of information is available, that all of the questions about cost, the questions about the relocation, the questions about documents, that they are available.

That is why we have opened up the process. That's why we've expanded the mandate of the committee; that's why we proposed that. That's why I've asked the Auditor General to look at both situations, and that's why the committee is doing its work. I really believe that we should let the committee do its work, and it should report back to the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, a senior VP at the OPA—the Ontario Power Authority—told the justice committee that the Oakville cancellation would cost the public somewhere between \$319 million and \$467 million—and that's before you get to new transmission costs.

1050

For months, the government has claimed that costs were \$40 million. For example, Premier McGuinty said in question period, "On the matter of cost, Speaker, it's \$40 million ... we've nailed that down."

Why was the government claiming costs were \$40 million when their own bureaucrats were telling them all along that their costs were much, much higher than that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, again, I have the quote—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Northumberland–Quinte West, you are warned.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, again, I have the quote from the vice-president of the OPA in testimony yesterday: "In the negotiation, because we were taking on some of the gas ... management fees, because we were"

taking on the gas turbines and sunk costs, “we did get a lowering of what we call the net revenue requirement or the monthly payment ... you’ve heard about...”

Mr. Speaker, those costs—and the witness did not take off or subtract the price-beneficial arrangements with respect to the power price. When you take that into account, the cost is brought down very, very significantly.

The Auditor General is looking into it. There will be other witnesses who will look at the figures and work certain assumptions—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Answer?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —in terms of the prices.

Let the committee do its job. The opposition should be patient instead of having a kangaroo court.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the very same VP told Ontarians yesterday that the government should have known that the cancellation cost a lot more than \$40 million because the government participated in negotiations and signed the very memorandum of understanding that set costs that much higher.

How can the government negotiate a deal, sign off on it, and then get the facts wrong?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, there’s something really strange here. Number one, the memorandum of understanding they’re referring to—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock. I will have peace in here, at least quiet so we can have the answer.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The memorandum of understanding that the opposition parties are referring to was online September 24. As well, the 500-page contract with the Oakville plant was online—500 pages of it. The memorandum of understanding, the press release, all the information they’re referring to and which was used by the witness from OPA yesterday, was made public months ago. They had all of that information. They never asked any questions on it previously. All of a sudden, it’s very relevant.

Why did you not read those documents that were made public? Why were you doing your job negligibly? Pay attention to what you’re provided with.

Mr. Speaker, all the documents were made available, including the memorandum of understanding that was referred to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier—but I have to say the Minister of Energy must have forgotten that the government prorogued the House so we couldn’t ask those questions in the fall. That’s the strange thing that’s going on around here.

Nonetheless, to the Premier: Yesterday, the secretary of cabinet, the most senior civil servant in Ontario, said with respect to the cancellation of the gas plants, “This is the government driving the bus.” Both the secretary of cabinet and a VP at the OPA told the justice committee that senior political staff from the Premier’s office were involved in the Oakville and Mississauga cancellations.

Is the Premier ready to admit that it was the Liberal government that was driving the bus on this gas plant scandal, and to stop blaming the OPA for the fact that it went in the ditch?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said, and it has been said by others, that this was a political decision, absolutely. I’ve said quite clearly it was a political decision. We’ve all in this House said that we would have made the same political decision. I really believe that this is common ground.

Let me read what was also said by Peter Wallace yesterday: “[T]hese files are inherently political. The cancellation and relocation of a gas plant is not an action undertaken autonomously by public service officials. This is an inherently political matter.”

No matter which party is in office, it is a political matter. To the question of the leader of the third party, I’ve said that this is a political decision, as it would have been had she been the Premier.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I’m going to ignore the Premier’s misinformation about the position that the New Democrats took during the election campaign. Across Ontario, people are facing real challenges. They’re being told by their government that we’re facing tough times, and they’re feeling it in their hospitals, in their schools and in the growing cost of everyday lives.

In the midst of this, the government has handed millions of dollars—up to a billion dollars—to private power companies so they could win a seat or win a couple of seats in a very tight election campaign. What does the Premier say to the people across Ontario who are sick to death of this government’s misplaced priorities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thought that all parties had said that they did not agree with the placement of either of these gas plants. I understand that the—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. The member for Nipissing, I think the same rules apply to you. When I stand, we’re supposed to be quiet. I’m trying very hard to get through question period, and I would ask for your support.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize; I was looking the other way.

The consensus in this House was that all parties agreed that these gas plants should not be sited where they were. So—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Lanark, you’re warned.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The agreement among all of the parties was that these gas plants should not be placed where they were. We followed through on that decision. We made that decision.

My consistent position has been that I wish that there had been a different process up front. I wish that there had been a different community process. I wish that we had made a different decision in the beginning because there had been a better upfront process. The fact is, that didn't happen, and so what I have said is, let's get all the information out on the table. Let's make sure there are processes in place to make sure that everyone, on all sides of the House, has their questions answered. That's what the Auditor General's investigation is about; that's what the broadening of the committee mandate is; that's why I'm going to go before the committee. Let's let those processes unfold.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Once again in Ontario, what a Liberal Premier thought and reality are two quite divergent things. The money this government spent cancelling these plants was enough to eliminate the wait in home care, not just this year but for many, many years into the future in this province. That was enough money to fund a First Start initiative to get young people working and to hire 7,500 full-time nurses in communities across this province. People have been asked time and time again to make sacrifices in tough times. Why can't the Premier offer a straight answer or a real explanation for this scandalous abuse of the people's trust?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, we've put a number of processes in place to get the questions answered.

Mayor Burton yesterday said: "Our citizens organized their own effort to ask the province to rethink the proposed power plant..."

"They won promises from all parties to stop the proposed power plant..."

"In Oakville, we certainly believed that we had those promises and that we could rely on them from all three parties..."

"So yes, we felt supported by all parties."

These were political decisions that were made. They are political decisions that would have been made by all parties. We were in the position to follow through on those promises. We did that, and now we have opened up the process to get all the information on the table and get the questions answered that are being posed by the public and by the members of this House.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Please sit down. Order.

New question.

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CASINOS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is for the Premier. Your statement that the host fee formula for a new

Toronto casino will be the same as all other municipalities has been directly and repeatedly contradicted by the OLG. For five days you told us there was no special deal. Just a few minutes ago, and after your repeated denials, the OLG has announced that they will be redoing the host fee formula to be fair to all municipalities. Premier, clearly there was a special deal, and you got caught.

My question to you today is straightforward: Who is calling the shots in this province? Is it the Premier or is it the OLG and the international casinos? Will you simply admit that your government offered a secret deal only to the city of Toronto?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I had asked the OLG representatives to come in today, Paul Godfrey and Rod Phillips, Mr. Speaker. I had asked for that meeting to be set up. I gave clear instruction to OLG that the formula for hosting fees has to be the same for all municipalities and that there will be no special deals. OLG has agreed to go back and review the formula based on those principles.

The principles of equal treatment and fairness will govern the formula going forward. That is my consistent position. That has always been my position, and OLG is in agreement with that. I called that meeting. I asked them to come in. I've given them clear direction, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Like every other Premier under the Liberal banner, you got caught in this mess. For the past five days, you have strongly denied that there was ever a secret deal offered to the city of Toronto, but you have refused to release the formula being used to calculate the hosting fees being promised, and you have failed to answer even simple questions about how the \$50 million to \$100 million number ever came about. Shockingly, despite nearly two months passing since your Liberal coronation, you are only now just getting around to meeting with the heads of the OLG to seek clarity on this important file. Today we heard that the OLG is immediately reviewing the host formula to ensure it is fair to every municipality in this province. Clearly, there was a secret deal only being offered to your hometown.

Premier, do you actually believe that a new Toronto casino will bring more profits than the entire Las Vegas strip? Will you now admit there was a secret deal to the city of Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear on a number of things from long before I was the Premier. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I was very clear in my early meetings with the OLG that I expected that there would be a fair process across the province. You can have a conversation with Mr. Godfrey, and he will tell you about the first meetings

I had with them. Having a fair process across the province, making sure that municipalities could decide whether or where they wanted a casino, that has been my position from the beginning.

I asked for a meeting with OLG. I've made it clear that it's my understanding that there would be a fair process across the province, that the same formula would be applied evenly across the province. That has been my position. OLG is now crystal clear that that is my position. They have gone back to review that formula and make sure that it is so, Mr. Speaker.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday a senior vice-president at the Ontario Power Authority told Ontarians that the Premier's office was negotiating around the Ontario Power Authority with regard to the Oakville gas plant. But she wasn't sure who in the Premier's office was responsible for negotiating with TransCanada. She said that put the OPA at a real disadvantage.

Who in the Premier's office was going around the OPA to negotiate with TransCanada?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, all of the information has been made available; that's available in terms of documentation. The OPA has acknowledged that they negotiated. They did the final contract. They decided which documents were going to be released. They made all the final decisions. They provided the information on costs to us.

We now have a committee with a broadened mandate, thanks to the Premier, and we will listen to all the witnesses that come forward, and we will have a decision at the end of the day from the committee. The committee is sitting as a jury, and the Speaker will ultimately make the decision as a judge, and let the process take place.

We have the OPA accepting the responsibility of having made the decision, having accepted the responsibility for the transparency of the documents that had to be released. We're comfortable now with the process that we have in committee, so that any doubts can be erased.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The minister needs to get an up-to-date response note. That was a previous question from a previous asker.

I'm going to go back to the Premier. Peter Wallace, the most senior civil servant in Ontario, told Ontarians yesterday that two senior Premier's office staff were going around the Ontario Power Authority to TransCanada while the OPA was trying to limit the cost to ratepayers. Can the Premier explain why the Premier's office was interfering in negotiations with TransCanada?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I can share the information that I have. The information I have, as the minister, is from the OPA, that they accepted the respon-

sibility for the negotiations. There may or may not have been other input, but they made the final decision. They made the final negotiations. They provided the documents.

We have the Auditor General looking into it. The Auditor General has access to every piece of paper in every ministry in the provincial government. He will provide his report.

Mr. Speaker, we are satisfied that the issues are being discussed in committee and that we have acted professionally and ethically every step of the way with respect to this government.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. This government has made jobs a priority, and we all know that research and innovation are key drivers of this knowledge-based economy. When businesses innovate, they are able to grow and create jobs.

But one major hurdle that businesses face in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South is access to venture capital. Venture capital is very critical for the businesses that want to succeed and compete.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is this government doing to ensure that businesses have access to venture capital so that they can invest, grow and create jobs for Ontarians?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I thank the member for that question. Small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario generally go beyond the traditional banking system. That's why we created Ontario Venture Capital II. Ontario Venture Capital II is based on the highly successful Ontario Venture Capital I.

Yesterday, the Premier announced our \$50-million investment in the creation of this venture capital fund. The federal government will be investing another \$50 million, and we expect \$200 million will be invested by the private sector, to create a fund in the amount of \$300 million. We expect that during the 12-year lifespan of this fund, it's going to generate \$4.45 billion in economic activity to Ontario.

This is a great—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Answer.

Hon. Reza Moridi: —for the province of Ontario. Our government is committed to support research, innovation and commercialization of research to grow the economy and create jobs in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mr. Speaker, it is great to hear that Ontario companies have a new source of funding that they can turn to. In challenging economic times, governments must work with the private sector so that innovators, small and medium-sized businesses, are able to grow and create jobs.

The minister mentioned that this is the second Ontario venture fund, and it is based on the success of the first

one. Mr. Speaker, through you, back to the minister: Could the minister tell this House what the first fund has accomplished?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question. In 2008, we created the Ontario Venture Capital Fund by investing \$90 million, and that created \$150 million in investments from the private sector and from institutional sectors as well. So we created a fund in the amount of \$205 million to fund research and innovation in this province.

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This fund was very highly successful. Just in the year 2011, the Ontario companies that benefitted from this fund created \$139 million in revenue and employed 1,000 people. This model is working, and we are very proud that we are supporting Ontario businesses and innovators to create jobs, to contribute to our economy and to create jobs for Ontarians.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the Minister of Energy. During testimony in the justice committee yesterday we heard from Peter Wallace, the secretary of cabinet, who spoke of allegations that a member of the Ontario public service directed the Ontario Power Authority to remove documents from the 56,000 pages that we've received to date. He stated, "As head of the Ontario public service, I would be ... concerned" about "any allegation of inappropriate behaviour by a public servant." An internal investigation was then launched against Jesse Kulendran.

Minister, when was the government informed of the investigation into Jesse Kulendran's behaviour? Who was at the clandestine meeting that she attended with political operatives who gave her instructions to remove documents from the pile that we received?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When the CEO of the Ontario Power Authority was here at Queen's Park answering questions, he was asked the question: "How often do you talk to political staff and minister's staff at the ministry? Are you given direction? Does it happen daily? Every week?" His answer was—this is Colin Andersen—"No. In our discussions, we are with the deputy's side of things and the bureaucrats that were dealing with it."

We have accepted the fact that it was a political decision to relocate those gas plants. It was as political as theirs was, and so that is the issue.

With respect to any potential interference, Peter Wallace did give some evidence. His quote yesterday was "they had not been able to find any concrete evidence to substantiate the allegation, that the witness, the individual involved, appeared to be truthful, that she appeared not to have, in her own mind, offered specific and highly inappropriate direction to the power authority."

We have been acting ethically. We've been acting professionally. The right people have been doing the right things. We stand behind that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, clearly the Minister of Energy should know about a leaked memo that the Ontario Power Authority provided to the Progressive Conservative caucus, where two dedicated OPA officials, Kristin Jenkins and Ziyaad Mia, were ordered to remove documents. In that document, Jenkins said, "Both Ziyaad and I have been clear that this is in fact what Jesse Kulendran told us to do"—referring to an order to remove documents.

Minister, do you take this matter seriously? If so, can you give us some answers as to why a civil servant, a known former Liberal Party staffer and a Liberal Party donor, would take it upon herself to order the removal of documents?

I have a very simple question, Minister: Who really gave that order?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Again, when the CEO of the OPA was here at Queen's Park he was asked a question: During the search for documents was there "anyone from the Premier's office, minister's office, or the ministry itself who directed or were involved in the search? At the OPA?" Mr. Andersen's response was, "At the OPA? Nobody was coming to the OPA with regards to the documents that we are talking about today."

We have the justice committee. We have the opportunity to bring witnesses in. They're trying to make this a court here. We have the justice committee, which they asked to have set up, to examine these issues. Let them do their work. The provincial auditor has access to every particular document. They're seeing ghosts behind every door.

CASINOS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. The new Liberal government is ignoring the people of Ontario just like the old Liberal government did. Communities like Hamilton, Kingston and Toronto have come out in strong opposition to being host sites to casinos. Yet the OLG is moving full steam ahead with privatizing gambling while giving companies sweetheart deals to bid for contracts.

Premier, will you choose to listen to the people of Ontario or to the Donald Trumps of the world?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I think that we made it very clear yesterday and today that there are no special deals. The formula is the same throughout the province. We met with the members of the OLG today. We've asked them to review to ensure that the principles of fairness and equity are being maintained.

The Premier has been very clear for weeks and months, prior to even being Premier, that she wants this to be dealt with fairly throughout the province. We're adhering to her wishes. OLG recognizes that. The people of Toronto and the people of all the other municipalities

and the councils: They'll make the decision because we've said that it's their decision to make.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: If the process was so transparent to begin with, then why the special meeting now to clarify the entire process?

Premier, the OLG privatization is having an adverse effect on people in cities and rural Ontario. People in Toronto and across Ontario don't want to be forced to accept a casino without being able to have a say. There's something wrong with this picture: a government and OLG negotiating sweetheart deals in their plan to privatize gaming, despite community opposition. Will you give Ontarians the ability to have a meaningful say when it comes to casinos in their communities?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear. It's the municipalities' decision. They're the ones that are going to make that decision first. From there, they'll decide what they're going to site and how they're going to proceed, and they'll have another opportunity to decide. We are giving the municipalities the power. They're the ones that will decide if they wish to proceed, and that's how it's going to be.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My riding of Ajax-Pickering is where many new Ontarians call home. These newcomers make up over 30% of our province's workforce, and that number is expected to rise in the future. These individuals help us to meet our labour market needs and they make invaluable contributions as members of our community. We are fortunate that nearly three of every four working-aged newcomers have a post-secondary education.

Despite a wealth of skill and knowledge, many of them are unable to find work that is consistent with their education and their experience. My question to the minister is: What is the government doing to help our skilled newcomers find work in their fields?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for the question. He's a great advocate for his community and for newcomers in his community. He understands the vital role that newcomers play in the workplace here in Ontario.

Before I answer the question, I'd just like to wish everyone who celebrates Nowruz here in Ontario—I want to wish them a happy new year, and I wish them a very peaceful and prosperous year.

Our government is committed to ensuring that everyone is able to put their skills to work here in our economy. That's why, as part of our immigration strategy here in Ontario, one of our key roles is to increase the employment rate of highly skilled immigrants. One way we're doing this is through our Bridge Training programs. So far, we've had over 50,000 people go through

our programs in over 100 different professions in 300 programs, and I'm very proud of that accomplishment.

Our Bridge Training programs are making a real difference, and they're helping highly skilled newcomers get the training and experience they need to get licensed and find work in their fields.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm sure all members agree that new Ontarians make valuable social, cultural and economic contributions to our province. When we help them find work consistent with their education and experience, we create benefits for their families and we improve our economy.

In my community of Ajax-Pickering, we are fortunate enough to be served by both the Ajax Welcome Centre Immigrant Services and the Women's Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre. My constituents tell me that our Bridge Training programs are making a difference. They are helping newcomers find work and they are strengthening our workforce.

As this government remains committed to helping newcomers succeed, can the minister tell the House of the results we are seeing from the Bridge Training program?

Hon. Michael Coteau: The member is correct: We're seeing great results from our Bridge Training program here in Ontario. As I mentioned, our Bridge Training projects have helped over 50,000 people find jobs here in Ontario. They're making a real difference. We've invested, Mr. Speaker, since 2003, over \$240 million into that program, and I want to give you a couple of examples of some of the success stories.

An internationally educated nurse with 17 years of experience found work in her field, after five years of looking for a job, once she got into our Bridge Training programs. To me, that's a huge success.

1120

A senior engineer from Iraq could not find work in his field. After participating in our Bridge Training program, he's now an engineer licensed here in the province of Ontario.

I'm very proud of our success that we find here in Ontario through our Bridge Training programs. Helping immigrants find work consistent with their education experience benefits them and their families, and supports our economy here in Ontario. When newcomers do well here in the province of Ontario, the province of Ontario does well.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. On March 6, the public accounts committee requested very specific information from Ornge through a unanimous motion. We requested all banking records and statements, all international money transfers to either personal or corporate accounts, and all domestic money transfers to either personal or corporate accounts from all

20 companies that were involved in the Ornge scheme. Today, in this letter signed by Dr. McCallum, we have a response.

The response says, “The committee has requested disclosure of various records from all the companies which were affiliated, from time to time, with the Ornge family of companies.” The letter goes on to say that much of that information is no longer available and that Ornge has no control over some of those companies. I’d like to know from the minister, will she help us get access to that information?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me assure the member opposite that Ornge is complying fully with the request. In fact, they have kept the committee up to date. They’ve provided status letters throughout the process. They’ve offered to appear before the committee; I believe Dr. McCallum is appearing this afternoon.

The committee, of course, can ask whatever questions they deem necessary, but I think the member opposite should know that there were four motions that the ministry complied with. Some 500,000 pages of documents—half a million pages of documents—have been delivered to the committee. A hundred boxes, four skid-loads of documents, have been delivered to the committee. We also have another 1.5 million pages of documents that are being provided on USB sticks, so Ornge is complying fully and the ministry is as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: This letter is dated today and signed by Dr. McCallum, telling us that the banking information for the 20 companies is not available. It’s not available because a number of those companies are supposedly in bankruptcy. For some reason, Ornge no longer has control over some of those companies.

It’s the flow of the money that we’re interested in, not the five million documents that tell us nothing. What we want to know is, will the minister use her good office to ensure that everything is done that we can possibly do so that we get access to these financial documents?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Absolutely. If there are documents that exist and the committee has requested them, we will ensure that the committee gets those documents. I think that Ornge has delivered 500,000 pages of documents—that might keep you busy for a little while—and another 1.5 million pages on USB sticks. If there’s more information that’s available, the committee will receive it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

You were all pretty good for about 10 minutes.

Interjection: Can you force them to answer the question, Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to the party that asked the question that I would expect them to be the most quiet in this room.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I’m done. Well, I’ll just continue, then, Speaker.

I think the member opposite might be curious to know how much it cost to print 500,000 pages. It cost, just for the printing costs, \$167,000 for the requests already delivered.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The leader of the third party.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. A 93-year-old couple in London has been separated by the long-term-care system after 67 years of marriage. The family reached out for help from this government, but so far they’ve been left hanging. One of Everett and Simone Price’s daughters, Marilyn Savage, has travelled to Queen’s Park this morning in the hopes that the Premier will finally hear of their plight.

When will this government uphold the principle of spousal reunification in long-term care and bring Marilyn’s parents back together?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to say that my heart goes out to the family in this situation. I know that the Minister of Health is doing everything that she can to make sure of unification and that couples are able to be together. In fact, we changed the rules in long-term-care homes to allow for couples to be together. It is absolutely our predisposition and our intention to do everything we can to keep couples together. I know the Minister of Health will want to speak specifically to what we are doing now. But we have already taken action and we’re very, very concerned that this is something that needs to happen, that people who have been together for that long—or even not that long because that’s an exceptionally long time—would be able to spend their days together, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, Everett and Simone Price aren’t getting any younger as they wait for reunification. This is not the way a seven-decade-long love story is supposed to end.

As recently as last week, I updated the government on the family’s situation by letter. The health minister has already agreed in media reports and in the chamber that “It’s the right thing to do” to bring this couple back together. She has publicly said that she’s working on it, but so far the family hasn’t heard a single peep from her office.

Will the Premier stand in her place today and tell Marilyn Savage what the plan is for reunifying her parents and when it’s going to happen?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as the Premier said, we want people who want to be together to be as close together as possible, and that’s why we have gone

as far as we have in bringing people together when both are in a long-term-care home. The next step is working on how we bring people closer together when one is in long-term care and one is in the community.

Speaker, I know that the CCACs work very closely with families who are facing these kinds of challenges. I urge families who are faced with an issue like this to work closely with the CCACs, who very much want to have people as close together as possible.

I would be more than happy to talk to the family members after question period. The CCACs are mandated to make this happen whenever possible. And actually, we have responded to the family from my office.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, as you know, Bill 160 came into force last April, and through it we transferred the mandate to prevent work-related injuries and illnesses from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to the Ministry of Labour. Minister, as part of this initiative, we also created a prevention office and appointed a chief prevention officer, the first government in Canada to do so. We did this, Minister, because we are a prudent government, a fiscally prudent government. We know that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and that's why we created this.

I had the opportunity to meet with the chief prevention officer when he came to my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville. But Minister, I'd like to know: This is a great idea, but what concrete results has the prevention office achieved since its inception?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member for asking a very, very important question, because I think we'll all agree in this House that workplace safety is of utmost importance. We need to make sure that our family members, when they go to work, return home safely at the end of the day.

As the member mentioned, I'm very pleased to note that Mr. George Gritziotis was appointed as the province's first chief prevention officer. His mandate will be supported by the newly founded Prevention Council. This council will help protect workers and improve workplace health and safety across the province. The council includes four labour representatives, a non-union worker representative, four employer representatives, an occupational health and safety expert, and a representative from the WSIB.

1130

In fact, Speaker, on my very first full day on the job as Minister of Labour, I had the opportunity to meet with the Prevention Council and thank them for the work they're doing. In the supplementary, I will speak to the consultation they have launched to build a strategy for health and safety.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that update.

I also understand that building on the prevention office, your ministry is launching the first province-wide consultations to develop an integrated occupational health and safety strategy. Could you tell us a little bit more about the strategy and what the consultations are about?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Absolutely. Speaker, again I thank the member for the question.

We know that more often than not, a lot of workplace injuries can be easily prevented. That's why we need to do a lot of work to ensure that prevention is key in workplaces, so that workers are safe at all times. The changes that are currently under way in our province are one of the greatest transformations of Ontario's workplace health and safety system in over 30 years.

We are, at the moment, consulting on a strategy that will focus on issues such as addressing the needs of vulnerable workers, supporting small businesses, high-hazard activities, and providing effective support for workplace parties. Our consultations are ongoing right now until May 17, and we're encouraging everyone to participate in those consultations. Please visit our website at ontario.ca/labour and click on the link for the prevention strategy. We need your point of view on this very important issue so that we can get the right prevention strategy in place.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Minister, in the March 13 edition of the Peterborough Examiner, you were quoted as saying that you were shocked to hear that Kawartha Downs had failed to agree to terms with the province's negotiating team and that racing would end on March 30, eliminating up to 800 local jobs. The story went on to say that you were totally surprised because the negotiating team had put a substantive financial package on the table for Kawartha Downs, including race dates for 2013.

As the closure of this track will have a devastating impact on both of our ridings, would you please enlighten the House as to what was actually in this package that was described as substantive?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for the question.

I stand by what I said to the Peterborough Examiner. We did put a substantial package on the table to Kawartha Downs, to Mr. Ambrose, and we also entered into negotiations with him. He decided that he wanted to reject that very substantial package that was put on the table. Due to confidentiality in terms of commercial negotiations—these are the same packages that we offered to Woodbine, that we offered to Mohawk, that we offered to Western Fair. The decision was made by Mr. Ambrose whether racing was going to continue at Kawartha Downs or not.

We're prepared to work with any interested party to keep Kawartha Downs racing for 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, this government seems to want to continue under a veil of secrecy instead of the minister representing the people that he said he would.

On August 16 of last year, you held a press conference, at which time you said that you had prepared a proposal which would keep slot facilities at the tracks and would maintain a share of slot revenues to support the industry. You said that these dollars stayed locally and created jobs for people in the community. You said that it was not a subsidy but, rather, an investment.

You also supported a private member's bill that would require referendums before casinos could be placed in communities, which you now say isn't necessary.

Minister, is becoming a cabinet minister worth betraying your constituents?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Sit down, please.

Minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the supplementary, a budget ago, when we had a budget allocation for the new Kawartha Trades and Technology—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you're warned. The Attorney General, order, please.

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: When the opportunity was there for the honourable member to support something in our region—the Kawartha Trades and Technology Centre—she and her colleagues voted against it. They voted against every allocation for Trent University to enhance the economy in our area. They voted against it.

Let me tell you about horse racing, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Order. The member for Simcoe North, you're warned. I'm sure all of us know that when I stand, you're required to stay quiet.

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, I've touched a nerve.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would you like the answer or not?

Minister, finish.

Hon. Jeff Leal: When it comes to horse racing, I just want to quote the honourable John Snobelen, who was part of the panel. He used to be a friend of the friends opposite over there. What did Mr. Snobelen say? "The Slots at Racetracks Program was neither transparent nor accountable, and a new system was needed to put in place for horse racing in the province of Ontario."

We remain hopeful that there's going to be a strong and vibrant horse racing industry—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock. Sit down, please.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will keep standing until I get quiet in the House.

Hon. David Zimmer: Remember what happened to poor old Norm Sterling.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, you're warned.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. In three days, it will be a year since your government announced the divestiture or the sell-off of the Ontario Northland, and in that year what you've managed to do is kill the passenger train and create incredible uncertainty among the employees, and that's about it. The promised savings obviously haven't been realized.

Courting the northern vote in the Liberal leadership race, the current minister of transport said: "I'd put the pause button on ONTC decisions. We should not be making these one-off decisions."

Minister, will this government follow the advice of the now Minister of Transportation, put a hold on the ONTC divestment and give northerners a chance to come up with solutions to the province?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for a very, very good question and I also want to thank him for the time and consideration he has given in meeting with me, having raised these issues with me privately. I know that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines right now is putting together an advisory committee to look at these decisions. The Premier, who has made a number of trips to the north, has also been entering into discussions with mayors and communities to look at options for ONTC going forward.

We will also be looking at an integrated transportation plan for the north, which we think will address these concerns. I know they are very material to the member opposite. They certainly are to people on this side of the House as well, and I look forward to working with him quite closely, and with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, in finding solutions to his satisfaction, realizing that I think, having spent—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear that our caucus was very contained through that entire exchange. The member had lots of time on the clock to get

to a supplementary. You didn't stop the clock. I would ask you to allow him to do a supplementary.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I have a—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I had a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I'd like a response.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Well, I'm about to. I would like the place to be quiet.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has moved a point of order, and I would ask the House if they agree to allow the supplementary. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker.

Once again to the Minister of Transportation: The government talks about its transportation strategy for the north, at the same time selling off vital transportation infrastructure. We move our product on rails, not strategies.

The government has struck a committee to discuss the ONTC, but participants have been asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Northerners deserve to know what the mandate of this committee is. Do they have the power to make decisions, or is it a shield to deflect the government's bungled attempts to sell northern infrastructure?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have been the minister only for a matter of weeks, and I've spent a lot of time with the member opposite and some of his colleagues going through these issues.

As we go through the divestiture period, ONTC services will continue. We've also been meeting with the mayors, and I met with FENOM, and I will continue to meet with FENOM, to look at the value of the rail service, commercial rail. It is our objective—and I think a shared objective with the members opposite—to improve transportation services in the north.

Half my family lives in Sudbury. I've used ONTC many times. None of my relatives ever thought it was optimal service, and I think we all believe we can do better. This government intends to hold itself to a pretty high standard when it comes to northern transportation and activity.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: Just for the record, I want to make it clear that we do love Justin Bieber; he is a phenom. FONOM is what the mayors are part of, not FENOM.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to correct my record. Earlier in question period, in a response to a question from the member from Newmarket–Aurora, I said that \$167,000 had been spent on printing costs. That actually includes paralegals and the movers we had to

hire to move the paper. The printing costs for the 500,000 pages was \$129,386.47. More documents are coming.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Noted. Thank you for that correction.

Mr. Rob Leone: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Given the fact that the Minister of Health has been able to provide us with a set of documents and numbers and facts and figures related to the printing costs, we should get these bank account statements as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

DEFERRED VOTES

INTERIM SUPPLY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Mr. Bradley for interim supply for the period April 1, 2013, to September 30, 2013.

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

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): On March 19, Mr. Bradley moved government notice of motion number 1. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Forster, Cindy	Murray, Glen R.
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Horwath, Andrea	Oraziotti, David
Brotten, Laurel C.	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Campbell, Sarah	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Mantha, Michael	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthof, John
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo
DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David
Fife, Catherine	Milloy, John	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.

Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod

McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John

Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 62; the nays are 34.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is my pleasure to rise here this afternoon to draw attention to the date March 31, 2013, which is only 11 days away.

March 31 is the date that the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government decided to arbitrarily end the successful slots-at-racetracks partnership and, without any consultations or warning, decided to pull the rug out from a successful industry and the over 60,000 hard-working men and women who are part of it. This is why I am proud that Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party are the only party to put forward a solid and comprehensive plan to grow and develop Ontario's horse racing industry.

So far, we have heard overwhelmingly positive feedback on our proposal to give racetrack operators an opportunity to buy existing slots operations at fair market value to help save their industry and provide a good return to Ontario taxpayers.

It's simple, really: Horse racing must be a key component of Ontario's overall gaming strategy. The government should cancel the OLG's plan to abandon racetrack slots and scrap their plan to build 29 new casinos. Instead, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party will build partnerships with the horse racing industry, allowing it to survive.

NORTHERN ONTARIANS

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm thrilled to stand up today on behalf of the constituents of Algoma-Manitoulin and across northern Ontario to congratulate skip Brad Jacobs and the northern Ontario curling team from Sault Ste. Marie on capturing the Brier title.

In a tremendous display of perseverance and dedication, skip Jacobs, third Ryan Fry, second E.J. Harnden and lead Ryan Harnden conquered a tough field at the 2013 Brier in Edmonton, defeating Manitoba in the finals to win the Canadian title.

Northern Ontarians are ecstatic to know they will have the opportunity to welcome the tankard, aka the cup,

back home for the first time in 28 years. We will be cheering these young men on from home as they represent Canada at the World Men's Curling Championship in Victoria, BC, from March 30 to April 7.

I would also like to congratulate another impressive northerner, whose perseverance and talent brought her to one of the final rounds of a national competition. Elliot Lake's own singer-songwriter Kori Rowe pushed through to the top 20 round of the CBC Searchlight contest. She made northeastern Ontario proud, and we look forward to following the future endeavours of this talented young lady.

To Kori on behalf of myself, I expect an autographed copy of your album when it goes platinum.

CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRES

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development is the largest children's treatment centre in Ontario.

In 2011, Mississauga MPPs and ErinoakKids announced funding for three new state-of-the-art facilities to treat kids with learning and physical challenges, one each serving Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville. After years of work, the ErinoakKids Foundation has raised its local share for the capital costs of the project. ErinoakKids is selecting the firms to design and build the facilities and will announce the location of the Mississauga facility later this spring.

The new facilities will be open by early 2017. From serving 58 children when Erinoak first opened in 1978, ErinoakKids is now Ontario's largest children's treatment centre. Today, it serves more than 12,500 children with disabilities each year in Dufferin county, Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville.

Families and donors in western Mississauga have worked hard to earn the new state-of-the-art facilities to help ErinoakKids make a difference each day in the lives of autistic and learning-challenged children.

As elected representatives, we measure our success in how we can improve the lives of the young and those who need help. ErinoakKids is one solid accomplishment for Ontario and for our Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville communities.

ALGONQUIN LAND CLAIM

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My constituents are concerned with the consultation process this government is undertaking with regard to the Algonquin land claim. Negotiations have been ongoing since 1991, yet the first time MPPs, mayors, the public and the Algonquins themselves were able to look at the map of the proposed settlement was just this past December 13.

Since then, I have met with hundreds of stakeholders, including residents, family members of the historic owners of Camp Island, and Chief Bastien. By far the biggest complaint is the lack of consultation.

Public meetings were scheduled on March 12 in North Bay and March 13 in Mattawa, right in the middle of the

March break, when many people were away. These can best be characterized as a dog-and-pony show and were not the serious consultations the public deserves. I made a short presentation to the negotiating team on the feedback I have been receiving.

Settlement of the Algonquin land claim will impact us for generations to come, and it is critical it be executed properly. This Liberal government may want to silence its critics, but I pledge today that we will be heard.

Speaker, I will also be reading a petition a little later on today that includes several hundred signatures from people I met with in my office continually over their concern about the lack of consultation. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this.

TRINITY-ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Built in 1889, Trinity-St. Paul's United Church, at the corner of Bloor and Spadina in my riding of Trinity-Spadina, is celebrating 125 years of service, community and worship.

To mark the occasion, Trinity-St. Paul's is embarking on a \$3.3-million revitalization project that will result in major improvements to the historic building and will expand the ways in which it serves the community. The renovated space, together with existing meeting rooms, studios, gym and kitchens, will ensure that our community has one of the most beautiful, comfortable and versatile centres for faith, justice and the arts in our community.

Trinity-St. Paul's plays a vital role in the economic and cultural health of our community and is home to several user groups, such as the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir, the Toronto Consort, the Toronto Health Coalition, Dancing With Parkinson's, and many educational and justice organizations.

Current and past congregation members, friends and community members who see the value and promise of this work are urged to make a pledge to this project. For more information, visit www.trinitystpauls.ca.

I would like to wish Trinity-St. Paul's United Church another 125 years of dedicated service at the heart of our community.

CYRIL SAHADATH

Mr. Joe Dickson: Ajax, Durham region and the track-and-field community mourn the loss of long-time teacher, coach and mentor Cyril Sahadath, who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on Monday of this week.

An institution at Pickering High School—my old alma mater—where he has been the head of the special education department, Coach guided the Pickering High Trojans to 13 Ontario high school track-and-field championships during his 25 years as a teacher/mentor at PHS while playing an integral role in the lives of several generations of students. A fixture in the Durham athletic community as well, Sahadath also coached the Durham X-L's Track Club.

He was more than a coach to the students of Pickering High School. Many regarded him as an inspiration and a father figure who motivated them with a timely word of advice or a powerful kick in the pants—whatever was needed to help them succeed not only on the track but also in life. In fact, many of his past students shared a special bond with their own children, taking pride as they watched Sahadath continue his work with subsequent generations of our community's youth.

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The coach also inspired others to the point of following his lead and becoming teachers and coaches themselves and sharing the lessons he first taught them.

I can tell you that he was just something special. Generations of people were not only proud to call him "Coach" but privileged to call him "friend." May he rest in peace.

GREAT AMAZING DUCK RACE

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would like to thank and congratulate Patti Thompson and King Cole Ducks in Newmarket for hosting the Great Amazing Duck Race, which took place on March 16.

The contest for culinary students was a farm-to-fork competition where students learned about fresh-farmed ducks and were put through a series of culinary challenges, travelling throughout the day from York region to downtown Toronto for the various competitions. The event brought together teams from North Bay, London, Toronto, Peterborough, Niagara, Kingston, Belleville and Kitchener.

I'd like to congratulate Bianca Aversa and Jonathon Williams from the Niagara College wine and culinary institute on their winning duck appetizer and entrée.

King Cole has 14 farms throughout York region and is a third-generation family-run business. The company has over 140 staff on 14 farms that total 1,200 acres.

Through hosting the Great Amazing Duck Race event, King Cole Ducks has provided a fun and competitive learning environment for up-and-coming chefs, bringing together culinary students from around Ontario.

ROD JERRED

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's with sadness that I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Rod Jerred. Rod was the ultimate community newspaperman. He graduated from Sheridan College and went on to a 30-year career with Metroland Media Group. He worked for community newspapers in Milton, Burlington and, most recently, Hamilton. But it was his work in my community of Oakville at the Oakville Beaver where Rod's impact was felt the most throughout his career. Rod's work at the Beaver led to numerous accolades, including the newspaper being named best overall newspaper in Ontario for four years in a row.

Since his recent passing, a number of people have honoured Rod's contributions. Jill Davis, Metroland's

editor-in-chief for Halton, recently wrote that Rod had an “undeniable passion for community journalism [that] was evident in everything that he did. His dedication to the craft was unrivalled.”

Many have credited Rod’s belief that his role in every issue of the newspaper was to connect people with their community as what caused the success Rod had. Rod connected many. He was never afraid to give a voice to those in need.

My deepest sympathies go out today to his family, his friends and to those in the Metroland community that Rod worked with. He certainly will be missed by all of us in Oakville and, through the newspaper craft, right throughout Ontario.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Mr. John O’Toole: Today I present a comprehensive report compiled by the parents of the Cartwright secondary school community. The report calls into question the decision by the Durham District School Board and the entire accommodation review process.

Some citizens are concerned that the accommodation review committee was not using the best facts and figures about topics such as student outcomes, teacher allocation, condition of the building and its systems, and enrolment projections. I can also say that a review of the information available to the accommodation review committee would ensure that the school board hadn’t made the wrong decision.

Cartwright has an outstanding record of excellence in student achievement, school spirit and close community ties. This is why the community wants the school kept open.

I congratulate the entire community. Cartwright is known as “the little school with the big heart.” Over 800 citizens have signed a petition—I’ll be presenting this later—to keep the school open. I’d like to thank John and Theresa Eccelston, Tony Gledhill, Stephen Evans, Craig Larmer, Patti Alpe, Claire Marsh—who wrote an extensive letter—Wilma Wotten, Joyce Kelly and other advocates and leaders within the community, including the mayor and council.

This is a wrong-headed decision, and I call on Ms. Sandals to reverse this decision immediately and keep the school open.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise on a point of order. I would like to clarify my earlier comments at question period this morning on the discussion surrounding the Oakville power plant relocation.

The memorandum of understanding from September 24, 2012, was signed between TransCanada energy, the Ontario Power Authority and the government of Ontario. The government of Ontario was involved in the discussions and was aware of the contents of the MOU signed by all parties and made public. I simply wanted to con-

firm that the government of Ontario relied on the expertise of the OPA in the course of those discussions.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr5, An Act to revive Terra Paving Inc.

Bill Pr11, An Act respecting The Royal Conservatory of Music

Bill Pr12, An Act to revive Universal Health Consulting Inc.

Bill Pr14, An Act to revive Aspen Drywall Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

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

Bill 31, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner’s reporting requirements / *Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne les rapports exigés du commissaire aux services en français.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Does the member wish to make a statement?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely. I thought you would never ask.

En ce moment, le commissaire aux services en français, l’excellent M. François Boileau, relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français. Le projet de loi va changer la redevabilité pour qu’il relève de l’Assemblée législative directement.

Currently, the French-Language Services Act requires the French language services commissioner to submit annual or special reports to the minister responsible for francophone affairs. The bill amends the act to require that these reports be submitted to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): My apologies, but I was asking a question of the table.

Shall Ms. Gélinas’s motion carry? Agreed? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

REGISTERED HUMAN RESOURCES
PROFESSIONALS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PROFESSIONNELS
EN RESSOURCES HUMAINES INSCRITS

Mr. Dhillon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association / Projet de loi 32, Loi concernant l'Association des professionnels en ressources humaines.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm reintroducing An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association, which was introduced in the last Parliament. This bill updates HRPAs existing self-regulation act of 1990 for the 20,000 HR professional members of HRPAs here in Ontario.

This bill creates a modern professional regulation statute for HRPAs and its members. It addresses many of the gaps found in the current private statute. It enhances public protection, strengthening the ability of HRPAs to effectively provide the regulatory oversight that it needs to meet the demands of its members and businesses in Ontario.

I feel strongly that this is a win-win situation for businesses and for the protection of the public.

SUPPLY ACT, 2013

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2013

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013 / Projet de loi 33, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Does the government House leader wish to make a statement?

Hon. John Milloy: I have no statement at this time, Mr. Speaker.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Mr. Murray moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of permit denials and out-of-province service and evidence in certain proceedings and to make a con-

sequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / Projet de loi 34, Loi visant à modifier le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les refus relatifs aux certificats d'immatriculation et la signification et les preuves extraprovinciales dans certaines instances, et à apporter une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Does the minister wish to make a short statement?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

LA FRANCOPHONIE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ministerial statements? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And minister for francophone affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): And minister for francophone affairs.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais tout d'abord souhaiter la bienvenue à deux invités spéciaux du journal Le Droit: M. Jacques Pronovost, le président et éditeur du journal, and M. Jean Gagnon, le rédacteur en chef. Ils sont ici pour une occasion bien spéciale et j'aurai le plaisir d'élaborer sur ce point dans quelques instants.

Nous célébrons aujourd'hui la Journée internationale de la Francophonie en Ontario, au Canada et partout dans le monde. Cette année, l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie a retenu un thème qui dit que « le français, c'est une chance » parce que le français, dans le monde, nourrit la solidarité et le dialogue interculturel.

C'est tellement vrai ici en Ontario.

Un des plus beaux exemples de cette solidarité entre francophones et francophiles en Ontario est l'objet d'une célébration historique cette année qui mérite d'être soulignée devant cette Assemblée: le 100^e anniversaire du journal Le Droit qui, contre vents et marées, a démontré l'importance de la solidarité et de la justice sociale.

Today, on the International Day of La Francophonie, I am very honoured to be able to highlight the transformative contribution that the only daily French-language newspaper has had in Ontario.

Le Droit a vu le jour le 27 mars 1913, en réaction au Règlement 17, qui interdisait l'enseignement en français dans les écoles de la province. Il n'en fallait pas plus pour mobiliser les parents, les leaders francophones et les religieux contre ce règlement qui menaçait la survie

même d'un peuple fier de sa langue et de sa culture, d'un peuple qui désirait participer de façon active à l'essor de la province.

Dès le départ, la devise du Droit disait que « l'avenir appartient à ceux qui luttent », une attestation quasiment prophétique de la vocation qu'allait se donner ce journal d'influence tout au long des dernières 100 années. Le Droit, dès sa fondation, est devenu un catalyseur de la communauté francophone en Ontario.

Plus qu'un simple outil de communication, Le Droit s'est transformé en un carrefour de réflexion, un lieu d'échanges et une source de mobilisation communautaire sans pareil.

La première victoire—celle de faire cesser l'application du Règlement 17—fut difficile mais combien gratifiante.

Back then, thanks to the support of this young newspaper with limited resources, the government of the day would finally stop imposing mandatory instruction only in English on francophone children. Of course, a victory like that gives you wings, but it also gives you a greater responsibility.

Voici ce que Le Droit a su faire :

Le Droit a rapidement su rencontrer les nouveaux défis confirmant son rôle central dans le développement et la reconnaissance de la francophonie ontarienne.

Le Droit a graduellement augmenté son tirage et amélioré son contenu éditorial en élargissant son champ de réflexion.

Le Droit a épousé d'autres causes touchant à l'identité franco-ontarienne comme celle de la responsabilité du gouvernement dans l'appui aux communautés minoritaires fondatrices du Canada.

Le Droit a fait la promotion de la dualité linguistique et de l'importance du développement culturel en français, en Ontario, par la publication des oeuvres d'ici ou encore la promotion de la vitalité de nos artistes, interprètes et producteurs.

Plus tard, Le Droit a été, encore une fois, un leader de premier plan dans la lutte pour la sauvegarde de l'Hôpital Montfort et l'augmentation des soins de santé en français. Et on sait aujourd'hui à quel point il a contribué à cette avancée symbolique et bien concrète.

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Le journal Le Droit, c'est également une entreprise bien de chez nous qui appuie le développement économique d'Ottawa et de l'Ontario français.

Le Droit est un fier partenaire, toujours présent dans les activités du milieu des affaires, et je veux aujourd'hui remercier l'équipe du Droit, qui est ici, en partie pour cette présence dans tous les secteurs de la vie française en Ontario.

Le Droit est également un leader médiatique qui favorise les nouveaux médias en travaillant de près, par exemple, avec la Télévision française de l'Ontario. De ce fait, il s'est aussi engagé à s'adapter aux nouvelles technologies et à se transformer et à se réinventer.

Je n'hésite pas à dire que nous n'aurions probablement pas réussi à faire connaître et respecter nos droits à l'éducation, aux soins de santé, à la justice, au

développement culturel, à la prospérité économique et aux services publics en français sans le journal Le Droit.

Ce qui m'amène à paraphraser le thème de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie qui dit que « le français est une chance » en Ontario, pour dire que nous avons également la chance d'avoir Le Droit pour protéger et promouvoir le français dans notre province.

My dear colleagues, I am sure you understand that celebrating la Francophonie is much more than just celebrating a language, a culture, or a branch of the media.

Celebrating la Francophonie means recognizing the key role that individuals, organizations and businesses like Le Droit have played in the development of the entire province of Ontario.

C'est aussi une question de solidarité et de dialogue interculturel parce que tant de nouveaux arrivants choisissent l'Ontario pour y vivre et progresser en français.

Notre première ministre, M^{me} Wynne, est une leader qui a toujours démontré par ses actions que le français, c'est effectivement une chance en Ontario, un atout indéniable, une force vive et un outil de développement exceptionnel. Le nouveau gouvernement de l'Ontario va donc continuer d'appuyer les francophones avec conviction.

Once again, this year, to celebrate the International Day of la Francophonie, a number of activities and events have been organized across the country and the region in our ridings to highlight the contribution of French language and culture in Ontario. I invite you all to participate actively in these events. Your presence alone will be worth a thousand words.

Le dialogue interculturel demeure un défi de taille partout dans le monde. Je souhaite donc que l'Ontario puisse continuer d'être un modèle unique et inspirant pour démontrer au monde entier que la reconnaissance de sa communauté francophone, combinée à la valorisation de sa diversité culturelle, est une source d'harmonie, de développement et de prospérité pour tous et toutes.

Je souhaite à tous une bonne Journée de la Francophonie et je souhaite au journal Le Droit un bon 100^e anniversaire.

Merci.

ROAD SAFETY

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Just before I get into the statement, I am joined by representatives today from the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards and governance in Ontario. I'd like to thank them for preparing the white paper, which was an important foundational document in the legislation I am about to introduce, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in the House today to deliver on a promise that will support Ontario's municipalities and help keep Ontario the North American leader in road safety. Municipalities from the north, south, east and west have asked for our help to collect outstanding unpaid fines. They

need our help to collect millions of dollars in revenue owed to them. We are committed to working diligently with our municipal partners to help them collect money owed to them from drivers who break the law.

If passed, this legislation will target drivers who don't pay their fines. They will have their licence plates denied at renewal time, and we will make it harder for drivers who break the rules of the road to drive on our roads. It will target offences under the Highway Traffic Act and the Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act—offences that put the safety of all road users at risk, such as speeding, illegal turns, improper lane changes, driving with no insurance and careless driving. We will also make it easier for municipalities to change and prosecute out-of-province drivers who run red lights and are caught by red-light cameras and who fail to stop for school buses.

We recognize the challenges municipalities are faced with in this time of fiscal restraint, Mr. Speaker. An estimated \$315 million is owed to municipalities from unpaid fines related to Highway Traffic Act offences, and an additional \$354 million in unpaid fines is owed under the CAIA, so \$669 million in these defaulted fines are owed to municipalities. These changes, if passed, will give municipalities more power to collect those funds, funds that municipalities can use to reinvest in their communities to enhance life for the hard-working families in those communities.

If passed, every 1% increase in the rate of collection brought about by these changes can mean an additional \$2.5 million in revenue for municipalities every year. This could mean better roads, libraries or improved services. It will certainly have an effect on the up to 75% of suspended drivers who continue to drive despite their disqualifications, because drivers who choose to drive while suspended with expired validation tags would be more easily identifiable to police.

Unsafe drivers have no place on Ontario's roads. Ontario is the North American leader in road safety, and we are committed to keeping our roads safe, just as we are committed to our municipalities that we would help them collect money owed to them, because the people of Ontario deserve no less.

I urge all members of the House to support this legislation. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Responses?

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. Peter Shurman: Je suis ravi de me lever dans l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage aux Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes pour la célébration du 15^e anniversaire de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

La présence française en Ontario remonte à presque 400 ans, en 1610, avec l'exploration d'Étienne Brûlé.

Je veux prendre cette opportunité pour ajouter mes félicitations au journal quotidien *Le Droit*.

On behalf of Tim Hudak and the entire PC caucus, I am happy to recognize the deeply rooted history that the French-speaking community has in Ontario and, notably, the great newspaper that serves it, *Le Droit*.

The importance of preserving our French heritage goes beyond our dual languages. In Ontario, we have taken important measures to ensure that our history is never forgotten. Half a billion francophones around the world will be celebrating the 15th annual International Day of La Francophonie today to celebrate their common bond, the French language, as well as their diversity.

Le français est une langue officielle dans 33 pays et cinq continents. Dans le monde entier, après l'anglais, le français est la langue secondaire la plus étudiée.

The PC caucus has always been instrumental in promoting the vital role that our French-speaking population has played and continues to play in creating and building our nation.

Le dynamisme de la communauté francophone que nous voyons aujourd'hui confirme que la langue et la culture françaises demeurent une partie intégrante et fondamentale de la société ontarienne.

Je souhaite des célébrations mémorables à tous les francophones. J'offre un accueil spécial du Parti PC aux invités du journal *Le Droit* à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Félicitations et merci.

1540

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to speak to the municipal fine collection amendment act—I may not have that quite right. I rise in response to the transportation and infrastructure minister's statement to introduce a new government bill regarding new tools to collect unpaid driving-related fines.

Basically, this act will allow licence plate denial as well as existing licence suspension to be used for leverage to recover unpaid fines. We are told that the total fines not collected in the last 40 years are \$954 million. It's a significant number.

This bill will enable tickets given out for red-light cameras and failure to stop for school bus offences to be sent to out-of-province drivers but still not force them to pay. That would especially affect people from Quebec who come across to Ottawa and aren't paying the fines.

The government is looking for money and is again focusing on people who cannot pay more. We are in difficult times, with a rising cost of living and high unemployment, so we have to be aware of that. Even though governments—municipal governments in this case—are keen to have more money, we have to be aware of the effect it will have on the people who live in this community. There are many people across the province who are unemployed; there are 600,000 people out of work. While we do not support letting people off the hook for unpaid fines, we feel that the timing of this bill is unfortunate. I know the government could be doing so much more to solve the jobs-and-debt crisis.

If this bill must pass at this time, we must make sure that its effect is not retroactive. There is a will to go back as far as 40 years. That would create undue hardship in the extreme for a lot of people, and that would not be a moral thing to do or a correct thing. It would have to become effective as of the day it passes and not be retroactive to the past. That is disrespectful of people and it's just not fair for people who have fines from before. We cannot disrespect citizens by going back into the past and changing the rules.

It would be reasonable if this bill took effect on unpaid fines in the future, and I implore the government to be fair and to make this change.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Cindy Forster: While we support the idea behind this bill, we should be collecting unpaid fines for road and traffic violations, but not only for the purpose of increasing government revenue, but to provide incentives for drivers to not speed, to not violate traffic laws, and hopefully to make our roads safer to drive on—and, at the end of the day, to save lives.

Municipalities, however, are starving for revenues. We've had major manufacturing job losses across this province: 600,000 people out of work, and that certainly has impacted taxes for municipalities. Between 1999 and 2002, the provincial offences program was downloaded to municipalities. Many of them weren't prepared for this download—this was under the Tory government—and, due to limited resources, many POA courts have just abandoned collecting these outstanding fines because they don't have the actual resources, the physical resources, to collect them.

In my own area in the Niagara Peninsula there are 1,100 delinquent cases added every month in Niagara. There are about \$2 million in 2010 outstanding, just in the Niagara region.

So I think that we need to do more about collecting these, but I think we also have to be cognizant of the fact that there are people out of work. There have to be some ways to enter into payment agreements with people who have outstanding fines, particularly those who need their vehicles in their job. We can't be taking people's licences away and taking away from their livelihood and their ability to support their families.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait tellement plaisir de souligner la Journée internationale de la Francophonie, qu'on appelle un rendez-vous incontournable des amoureux de la langue française.

J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue aux représentants du journal *Le Droit*. Félicitations pour vos 100 ans. C'est toute une célébration.

Une petite parenthèse : ici, les députés reçoivent les coupures de journaux, mais on ne reçoit pas les coupures du journal *Le Droit*, donc j'espère que ça ne nous prendra

pas 100 ans avant que le journal *Le Droit* soit rajouté aux coupures de journaux que les députés reçoivent.

Ma collègue du Niagara vit dans une région désignée, une région désignée où le gouvernement fédéral est capable d'offrir des services en français, mais lorsque tu regardes du côté provincial, bien, il n'y en a pas. Des services de santé en français dans Niagara, il n'y en a pas. On nous ressort des excuses qui goûtent un peu les restants réchauffés, mais sans aucune bonne raison. On sait tous que ça commence par la désignation.

On a reçu aujourd'hui un beau courriel de M^{me} Laura Lutoto, qui est avec l'ACFO de Durham-Peterborough. Ça fait longtemps, eux, qu'ils attendent pour avoir une région désignée, et ils attendent toujours pour que la région soit désignée. Il y a des choses qu'on pourrait faire pour rendre la vie des francophones un peu plus facile.

Aujourd'hui, j'ai redéposé pour la troisième fois—peut-être que ça va être la fois chanceuse—mon projet de loi pour donner au commissaire aux services en français le droit de relever directement de l'Assemblée législative. En ce moment, M. François Boileau, excellent de bon commissaire, relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français. Il n'y a eu aucun problème. Ce n'est pas parce que la ministre n'a pas bien fait son travail—loin de là—mais c'est vraiment pour assurer la pérennité du poste. Le commissaire à l'environnement, le commissaire à l'intégrité, le commissaire à l'information et la protection de la vie privée—tous ces commissaires relèvent directement de l'Assemblée législative.

Je crois qu'en 2013, après les excellents rapports que le commissaire a faits—dans son dernier rapport, entre autres, il dit ouvertement qu'il est temps que les pouvoirs du commissaire soient augmentés afin qu'ils relèvent directement de l'Assemblée. J'espère qu'en ce renouveau de Parlement minoritaire, on verra une collaboration au niveau des services en français également. Ça me ferait extrêmement plaisir et je pense que ce serait un pas de bonne volonté pour démontrer l'importance des services en français.

Encore une fois, félicitations au journal *Le Droit*. On a toujours des petites compétitions avec *Le Nord*, mais on admire beaucoup ce que vous faites dans l'Est avec *Le Droit*. Merci.

PETITIONS

ALGONQUIN LAND CLAIM

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are serious concerns with the process leading to the current agreement in principle (AIP) between the AOO, the government of Ontario and the government of Canada, as well as with the selection of certain lands to be transferred to the AOO;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to do the following:

“(1) Amend the AIP to include protection of the public interest as it is apparent from the AIP that the province did ensure that its own corporate interests were protected, however, there is no indication that any effort was made to protect the public interest or that it was considered in any balanced fashion;

“(2) Retain Camp Island (as identified by parcel 83-F3) as crown land for public use and that it not be transferred to the AOO as the island has a long history of private ownership and was sold to the crown in 1970 for \$5 only after assurances were given that it would remain in its natural state and be for public use, and the crown would be breaking those assurances and breaching the public trust if the island was transferred to the AOO as the island would then become private land for the enjoyment of few; and

“(3) Ensure Mattawa River Provincial Park (MRPP) remain as crown land for public use and not be transferred to the AOO as the park was created in 1970 and expanded in 1999 in recognition of its historical, cultural, recreational and ecological significance under Ontario’s Living Legacy Lands for Life initiative, and any development in the park would create a severe ecological and environmental disturbance to the area and exclude a very large community of local, provincial, national and international visitors from experiencing the uniqueness of this area.”

Mr. Speaker, I join hundreds of signers of this petition by signing my name and handing it to page Megalie.

1550

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai cette pétition qui me vient de partout en Ontario.

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive, en français, des services de qualité du gouvernement de l’Ontario et de surveiller l’application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l’ombudsman, au commissaire à l’environnement et au commissaire à l’intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l’Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français. »

Ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative « de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu’il relève directement de l’Assemblée législative. »

J’appuie cette pétition; je vais y apposer ma signature et je demande à Emily de l’amener aux greffiers.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the NDP member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton has put forward a plan for auto insurance that would dramatically drive up rates for drivers throughout northern Ontario. According to one estimate, drivers in northwestern Ontario could expect to pay 38.8% more in insurance premiums if the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton’s proposal is adopted;

“Whereas Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada has said, ‘In essence, the bill would force responsible drivers to subsidize the insurance premiums of dangerous drivers’;

“Whereas the leader of the third party and the other NDP members of the Legislature have made it clear that they continue to support the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton’s proposal for auto insurance reform;

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

“To make it clear that the Legislature does not support the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton’s proposal to change auto insurance in Ontario.”

I support this; I’ll affix my signature to it and give it to Fae.

AIR QUALITY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that consideration.

My petition, from the riding of Durham, reads as follows:

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario’s automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year,” especially when it’s not raining;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced” rigorously “by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this on behalf of one of my constituents, Dan Dale, who is from Port Stanley. I present it to one of the new pages here, Brittany, and I support this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Cindy Forster: A petition:

“Re: Dr. Kevin Smith’s Niagara Health System report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care proposed changes to the hospital services in south Niagara.

“Whereas the residents of south Niagara will not have equal, fair, safe and timely access to in-patient gynecological, obstetrical and pediatric services due to distance; and

“Whereas excessive travel times and lack of public transportation for residents in south Niagara will put patient safety at risk; and

“Whereas, if implemented, Dr. Smith’s recommendations and the proposed location of a new south Niagara hospital in Niagara Falls is approved, a two-tier health system in Niagara will be created, where north Niagara will be overserved and south Niagara will be underserved in relation to the safe and timely access to health and hospital care; and

“Whereas, if hospital services including in-patient gynecological and mental health, and all obstetrical and pediatric services from the Welland hospital site and the Greater Niagara hospital site will be relocated to the new north Niagara St. Catharines site in 2013, it will undermine the continued viability of these two sites as full-service hospital sites;

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

“We request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to maintain existing services at the Welland hospital site and the Niagara Falls hospital site and that no services are to be moved until this new south Niagara hospital is open and request that any approval for a new Niagara south hospital include a site that is centrally located in Welland.”

I support this petition, affix my signature and will present it to Helen, one of the new pages.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have been presented a petition this week at the rally outside of Queen’s Park. I have approximately 500 to 600 names, primarily from the Ajax-Pickering area, and I wish to present it to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in Ontario, abortion is a service covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), paying for more than 32,000 abortions at hospitals and private abortion facilities, at a cost to taxpayers of at least \$30 million per year; and

“Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness; and abortion is not a medical necessity ...;

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

“To cease providing taxpayers’ dollars for the performance of abortions by passing legislation to remove

abortion as a service covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan.”

I will attach my name to it and pass it to page Nadim.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Petitions? The member from Sudbury—Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: That was quick, Mr. Speaker; that was really quick.

“Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don’t complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

“Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include Ontario’s long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 27, 2013, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kenora—Rainy River will take control.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I must say that I am pleased to be able to finish the second half of my response to the speech from the throne. During my first half I discussed the strong feelings of alienation that northerners are feeling as a result of the government ignoring us over the past almost 20 years.

I’d like to start off by mentioning one area which is very relevant right now; it’s a timely area where we need this government to act. That is to save the Experimental Lakes Area in my riding. This centre is the only one of its kind in the world. It promotes not only research, but innovations that benefit industry as well as science. It is this type of facility that we should not only be proud of, but that this government should fight to keep operating.

We are discussing here today the speech from the throne that mentions research, innovation, opportunity and making Ontario a world-class place to do business, so how can we as a government stand idly by and watch

one of the few areas where we are a leader be slowly dismantled by the federal government—a government that lacks vision, fears science and does its best to muzzle those who speak against it? I would like to take this opportunity to thank my federal counterparts, who are right now debating an opposition day motion that would prevent its closure. This fight is a partnership, and has involved members of the NDP, the Liberals, the Greens and independent members. We need this government to stand up and take real action to join the fight.

In Ontario, we have a new Premier, and she is aware of this issue. She needs to give the direction today, take a strong stance and stand up for this facility, for it is a facility that each and every one of us in this House should be proud of.

When the Liberals chose a new leader, they had an opportunity for change. We have a Premier who has heard plenty of northern voices stating that the direction this government has taken is wrong, but this throne speech does little to address the concerns that we have raised. We have a province where the south is happy to use our resources and exploit our mineral wealth, and it doesn't seem to matter if we in the north benefit or not. That's what we've seen in this government, and it's not the type of leadership that we're looking for.

1600

The Ring of Fire has vast potential to put hundreds of millions of dollars into our northern economy. It has the potential to benefit First Nations on whose land these resources exist. It can bring an end to the cycle of hopelessness and despair that has haunted many communities in northern Ontario. But we fail to see any sort of plan, any desire to compromise, any willingness to work with First Nation communities and municipalities in our region in the northwest to bring jobs and prosperity to our region.

Rather than consult, this government, including then-Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and current Premier Kathleen Wynne, has made backroom deals with some mining companies, some of which have had little concern for the opinions or views of those who live on the land that they hope to mine. They make the deals, and once everything is signed, sealed and delivered, they say, "Okay, it's time to consult."

In committee last fall, I raised this very issue with the Premier, who was then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. She seemed to think that this is a perfectly okay way of doing business. Whether it's signing deals to extract the wealth of the Ring of Fire or announcing the twinning of Highway 17 outside of Kenora, this government has repeatedly failed to honour not only the treaties that were made on a government-to-government basis with First Nations but northerners in general.

In Shoal Lake, for instance, the government went as far as drawing up plans, wasting taxpayers' dollars and announcing the plans publicly, expecting that the road from Shoal Lake through their traditional territory wouldn't be a problem. When they found out it might be a problem, did they then honour the treaty? No, they

didn't. They sent bureaucrats who had no power to make decisions or commitments to the table. Those bureaucrats made promises and came back and said, "Oops, sorry. I guess we didn't have the power to make those decisions." The question is: How bad did the then minister and now Premier mess things up? I have been told by the community of Shoal Lake that she messed things up to the point that Shoal Lake 39 would no longer talk to her ministry, to the point that they would only discuss this issue directly with the then Premier.

Meanwhile, what have we got? We've got people in Kenora and the surrounding area who are left wondering where the twinning is. After all, the money was dedicated, or so we were told; shouldn't there be some kind of progress or construction? Again, it points to Premier Wynne's view of consultation.

This past September, in the estimates committee when I asked the then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, now Premier Kathleen Wynne, about what was going on, she said, "My understanding is that the conversation has been on a trajectory towards an action plan. Once that action plan is in place, if there are decision points, obviously I'd be happy to sit down with the community. I'd meet with the chief—whatever. I offered that to him. I said that I would meet with him. But unless there are decisions to be made, if it's still in the stage of trying to sort out what the way forward will be, then there isn't as much of a role."

So I said, "I think that's maybe where" our opinions and "our interpretations of the treaty" diverge, because "my interpretation is that the crown should be meeting directly."

Then she said, "But the government is—sorry, I just have to be clear. To suggest that the crown is not meeting, that the government is not meeting, when bureaucrats, when employees of the government are meeting on my behalf ... to suggest that that is not the crown meeting with the community, I think that's a difficult contention."

Then she suggested that it's not practical for the minister to meet with the community and engage in consultation from the beginning. So not only did the minister put the cart before the horse; she failed to ensure that there is even a path to get where she wanted to go.

Maybe that's why there's no significant mention of this government's plan for First Nations in the throne speech. The only mention is that this government intends to pressure the federal government to do the right thing. But maybe, before they do that, they should try doing the right thing themselves, rather than thinking of First Nations and all northerners as an inconvenient afterthought.

As I've said, our expectations in the north are very straightforward. We want to be able to live, work and retire in the region we love. We want input on the decisions that directly affect us. We want to know that if we work our entire lives, we can continue to live in the communities where we raised our families. That, unfortunately, is becoming less common.

This speech from the throne does nothing to alleviate those concerns. Seniors across the north are finding it

increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Many have had their pensions, which they worked hard for, gutted, with no protection from the provincial or federal governments. They worked hard their entire lives and were promised a certain standard of living in return for that work, but governments stood idly by as employers made promises that they couldn't keep, guaranteeing income that they could not provide. When those companies told those who had retired already and who were counting on those fixed incomes that there was no money, the government stood idly by again and allowed it to happen.

In some cases, the provincial government has continued to reward companies that have gone bankrupt before and skipped out on their obligations. The first time pensions were decimated, this government should have acted, but time after time we have seen guaranteed incomes vanish into thin air, and the government has done nothing to help those individuals who have been affected.

Even worse, the government has rubbed salt in the wounds. Seniors and families across my riding are looking for action on hydro prices. The cost of electricity is artificially high as a result of government policy. Northerners are paying rates that do not even closely resemble the actual cost of generation. We generate some of the cleanest and cheapest electricity in North America, but our prices don't reflect that. The throne speech touches on hydro prices but doesn't say what, if anything, will be done. Families are unable to keep the lights on, and businesses have closed and are continuing to shut down because of the high price of hydro.

Since being elected, I have raised this issue. I have asked for a plan. All the throne speech is saying is, "We're aware of the problem." That falls dramatically short of the action we need.

But it's not just families who are having difficulty paying the bills; it's everyone. Businesses, even municipalities, cannot afford to operate in the conditions that have been created. Communities like Dryden, Ear Falls, Fort Frances and others are reeling from MPAC assessments that will force them to pay back money that is not only already spent; it was spent three years ago. Communities are not only looking at cutting staffing but cutting services that are in many ways essential, such as libraries.

We're facing a crisis now, and we need immediate action. This government needs to step up to the plate on so many issues, but this speech only brings vague acknowledgements that the problems exist. We want to see solutions, but time is running out.

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to speak on the throne speech, Mr. Speaker. We are making tremendous progress by working together right here in the province of Ontario. I appreciate the member from Kenora-Rainy River for her thoughtful insight, but I totally disagree with her. This government very much understands that only by working together can we move forward, and by working together we can prosper together, and by

working together we can all benefit. This government is committed to work with all communities, northern communities, aboriginal communities and all the municipalities, so I totally, totally disagree.

In the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, our new government laid out priorities. What are those priorities? Building a stronger and fairer Ontario, making the minority Parliament work, and making life a little easier for all of us so that we can all benefit.

This government is committed to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18. Now Ontario's deficit is \$3 billion lower than what it was projected in the last budget. This is the fourth year in a row that Ontario is ahead of its fiscal targets. This province has gained 411,000 jobs, and the job recovery pace has exceeded the United States and the United Kingdom. We are committed to work together, and we are not ignoring any community. We have invested \$50 million in capital venture funds so that businesses all across Ontario can benefit.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I stand to talk for two minutes on the throne speech. The first part of my disappointment would be the fact that in those 17 pages there was one-half of one sentence devoted to northern Ontario. I'll repeat that, because it bears repetition. This is not half a book or half a page; it's one-half of one sentence that was devoted to northern Ontario.

1610

It brings to mind, of course, the budget of last year, as well—the budget that our party voted against—that talked about the fire sale of Ontario Northland. Speaker, I would tell you that in the budget, the then Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan, suggested that the fire sale of Ontario Northland would save the province \$262 million. Since that time, I have successfully engaged the Auditor General to investigate the fire sale of Ontario Northland, and I expect that he will prove that not only are there no savings of \$262 million, but that it actually may end up costing that amount.

In the interim, I have asked our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, to hit the pause button on the sale of Ontario Northland so that we can wait for the Auditor General's report, but also so that we can do a strategic review of all of the assets of Ontario Northland. The letter that I got back said the Liberal government will be proceeding with the divestment, along with proceeding with the growth plan of northern Ontario, which, again, does not even mention Ontario Northland one time.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to commend my colleague from Kenora-Rainy River for her true understanding of the issues that she's facing in her area—me, as well, from Algoma-Manitoulin. I feel the same pains, in particular with the communities, with the First Nations, whereas when issues come up, it's a secondary reaction. Instead of acting and being proactive on particular issues, we're reacting, and it becomes a nuisance:

“Oh, jeez, we forgot this step. Now we have to address it.” Well, I’m sorry; we’re going to do it now.

We should be looking at an inclusive method of how we’re going to be doing this, and how we do that is really by setting our priorities straight here in this province. We really need to have a focus as far as, who are we going to be making decisions for? Who will be beneficial of the actions of this province?

It’s very hard for me to talk to people in Algoma–Manitoulin in regard to how the respite beds for their loved ones are being cut in their families, how an 11-year-old girl who is clinging to life—how I have to explain to her, “Well, wait a second. The government is making decisions on not closing corporate tax loopholes because that’s going to be beneficial to them to creating jobs.” Where is the priority in this province? Where are we going to be putting our focus? We need to be getting results for those individuals. How is it that I’m going to be in a position to explain to this family that we have money, billions of dollars, to relocate gas plants or to deal with Ornge scandals when we can’t deal with the everyday essentials that we need for community members? Even our municipalities, who are concerned and challenged as far as how they are going to maintain their roads and their bridges—how are they going to be able to sustain the services that they have?

Essentially, what I’m saying is that we need to take a clear direction as to where our priorities are in this province to bring the services that we need and the assistance to many in this province.

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: I’m pleased to stand and rise on this bill that is before us.

I have to tell you that the government will continue to balance its books. It’s also a challenge to the people of Ontario to help the province motivate and grow.

Interjections.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I guess no one on the other side realizes that we are ahead of schedule in reducing the balance of the deficit, and we continue to do that on an ongoing basis.

I recently drove in northern Ontario, up to Sudbury, and I was quite impressed and very pleased with the amount of money that I saw. There were new bridges, refurbished bridges, new runoffs, extended runoffs, repavement of highways. I jokingly said to one of my northern Ontario colleagues, “Now I know why we’ve got gridlock in the GTA: because we’ve sent a lot of the money up north.”

What has happened is—

Interjections.

Mr. Joe Dickson: All governments treat each area equally. That government, that government, this government treat everyone equally.

But I have to tell you that the largest problem we face in this country is a global recession of 82 years. Think about it. Think about the Prairies. They’re still growing wheat. Think about BC. With the exception of the bug

they have in the forests, they’re going full steam ahead. Think of the Maritimes: fishing, all the other services. Think of Newfoundland: fish, lumber, offshore oil—greater wealth than they’ve ever had.

The only province impacted is Ontario, and the reason is offshore competition worldwide.

I have a factory that produces goods. We pay people \$30 an hour if they’re skilled production—

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: How do you compete—

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: —with China, India, Brazil—

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I said “thank you” three times. The member will sit down when I stand up. I said it three times. It’s good to pay attention to the Speaker. I’d appreciate that in the future. Thank you.

The member from Kenora–Rainy River has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. You know what? If that comment was made to me when I was first elected, I may have found it kind of humorous, but that is not funny. That was so offensive to people living in the north who have to beg government after government just for pavement. We have so many roads that are not maintained.

You can talk to anybody in the north. One of the biggest problems we are battling this winter is a very grave, very serious issue, and that is basic maintenance of our main thoroughfares. We cannot get in and out of our communities. The number of fatalities we have had this winter alone just boggles the mind.

What I was intending to say here was that since we’ve come back, I’ve been fairly negative in my speeches, and I really don’t like to take that position, because we have a tremendous opportunity before us right now with this minority government. With the economic opportunities we have across the north and across Ontario, we can get together and make some real progress on any number of the issues I raised here today. Northerners are getting increasingly frustrated. I don’t know if you tuned in to the first half of my speech, but I talked about how we are feeling increasingly alienated. We’re getting frustrated. We don’t want to put up with it anymore.

Here, we have an opportunity where we can get together. We can make some real movement and some progress on these things, and we have the governing party that is completely unwilling to even meet us halfway.

Interjection: Totally out of touch.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: They are out of touch.

What would be nice is if the members opposite would listen to our concerns and then go one step further and help us address these concerns.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It’s a real pleasure for me to stand up today in this House and deliver remarks very strongly in support of our government’s throne speech. I

should also mention—I believe anyway; in fact, I know—that this is technically my maiden speech here in this hallowed chamber. It's a real privilege for me to have the opportunity to stand here among my colleagues and the members opposite to deliver some remarks in support of the throne speech but also to talk a little bit about why it's an honour to be a member of provincial Parliament and, in particular, an honour to represent the community that's as wonderful as the community of Vaughan.

As some of you—I think all of you—will know, I was elected back on September 6, the same date the member from Kitchener–Waterloo was elected. September 19 was the date of our swearing in, and that was a very important milestone in my life. It was a great day for me to be here, surrounded by all the members of this Legislature but, beyond that, to be surrounded by family, friends and supporters who were here filling the public galleries and the members' gallery to demonstrate their continued support for what I had undertaken as a successful candidate in Vaughan.

That day—and I say this as someone who used to work in this building for my predecessor, the former member of provincial Parliament for Vaughan, Mr. Sorbara—also demonstrated to me the very, very best this Legislature has to offer, in that as both myself and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo were marched into the chamber and introduced to the chamber for the very first time, we had the chance to be received so warmly by all 107, or 105, other members of this chamber with rousing applause. It was certainly something that I found to be a bit of an overwhelming experience, and I believe the member opposite from Kitchener–Waterloo would agree with that characterization.

1620

To be introduced into the chamber by my leader of the day, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, and our House leader, the Honourable John Milloy, and to see my friends and family here to offer their continued support, was something that I know I will never forget. Specifically, on that day, there were some people who were here in the chamber, and every day that I come back into this building, every day that I come back into this House, I'm reminded of why I am here working as hard as I am. I believe that this is the kind of spirit that actually infuses every one of us who comes into this chamber. It certainly should. I'm referring, of course, to my wife, Utilia Amaral, and my two young daughters, Talia and Grace. They are not here today. They were here back on September 19. My daughter Talia is five years of age and Grace is two years of age.

Over the course of the last number of months, as I've been serving as the MPP for Vaughan, at all of the community events that I go to, I often reference the fact that I work as hard as I do—we all work as hard as we do, I believe—in this chamber to make sure that the future of this province is as bright for our children and for our grandchildren and for our neighbours' children and grandchildren as it has been for us. Certainly, over

my lifetime, my nearly 40 years of living here in this province of Ontario, I know how lucky and how fortunate I've been to have had the very best opportunities. I'm here and I work as hard as I do, and I love having this opportunity, because I want to make sure that in every way possible—economically, socially, whether it relates to their education or to their health care—my daughters have the same kind of future and the same kind of opportunities that I've had.

That day, on September 19, my parents, Margaret and Ben Del Duca, were here with us. For those who don't know—and I know some here in this chamber do know—my father is an immigrant from Italy who came in 1958, and my mother is an immigrant from Scotland; she came in 1961. To have them here, knowing full well, over the last, again, 40 or so years, of the sacrifices that they undertook to make sure that myself and my siblings, my sister and my two brothers, would have the very best opportunities, to know that they were here that day to share in my success, to share in that very special moment, to watch me be introduced to this chamber, was something that was very special to me. I know it will be awfully hard for me to live up to the standard that they have set, as a parent and as a spouse, but I certainly do endeavour to do that every single day.

And, of course, just to round out the cast, because there were quite a few here—there were over 100 people here that day from my community: my siblings, as I mentioned a second ago; a number of cousins, supporters, people who came out over the course of the by-election campaign. And before that point in time, people who have supported me my entire life were here, individuals like Rocco and Mary Grossi, cousins of mine who have the good fortune of being the ones who actually initially introduced me to the world of politics about 25 years ago, when I was only 14 years of age. To see all of these people here—the Cardiles, to see Frank and Lucy Cardile and others here that day, and to know that with their support and with their ongoing help, I was able to arrive in this place and to represent them, not only as friends but also as constituents, was extremely gratifying for me.

It was also a day for me to get a tiny bit nostalgic, because, of course, there are family members with whom I was extremely close growing up who weren't able to be with me here that day, at least not physically. I speak, of course, of my grandparents, both my maternal and paternal grandparents: my dad's parents, Michelangelo and Alfonso Del Duca—Alfonso actually being my middle name, taken from my paternal grandfather—people who came in the 1950s and 1960s, respectively, from Italy; and in the 1970s, in the case of my maternal grandparents, Henry and Margaret Leonard, from Scotland, people who did their very best to help in every way as I grew up, as I learned from them about the meaning of hard work and the meaning of sacrifice and commitment to one's family, to one's community, to one's country.

It was, as I said a second ago, a bit of a sentimental moment on the 19th of September, a bit of a nostalgic

day, knowing that they weren't here in person, physically, as they have passed on, but knowing that their spirit, I hope, anyway, lives through me in all of the hard work and all of the determination I have to continue to represent the people of Vaughan in the very best possible way.

And friends, friends like the late Tony Gallagher, an individual who I first met back in my very first political experience, the 1988 federal election campaign when, as I mentioned, I was only 14 years of age, going on 15—an individual who was there for me at every turn through many campaigns, through many different years, and someone whom I still miss to this day.

There are a couple of individuals that I do also want to thank. I mentioned a second ago my predecessor, the former member of provincial Parliament from Vaughan, the honourable Greg Sorbara. Greg is someone who is a mentor of mine, someone who is a former employer of mine, a former boss of mine, someone who's a very dear friend. When I look at the community of Vaughan, a city in which I've lived for the last 25 years or so, and I see how much we've grown over the last quarter-century, and I look at how that growth has been shaped so positively, I can see that Greg's fingerprints and Greg's inspiration and energy are all over that in terms of making sure that the right kinds of investments came to our community in Vaughan. To have had the chance to have worked for him directly and to have managed a couple of his campaigns and chaired campaigns, and to have been close and witnessed first-hand that dynamic energy and enthusiasm and that extremely positive, uplifting personality, that spirit that he has, is something that I draw upon on a regular basis. So I want to say here, today, thank you to Greg Sorbara for being such an outstanding MPP and predecessor and friend of mine.

I also want to pay a very quick tribute to my former leader and my former Premier, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, the member from Ottawa South, an individual whom I've had the chance to know for the last 16 or 17 years, and someone who, I think, when you take into account his entire career, you see an exceptional public servant, someone who understands the importance—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to remind the member. I've given quite a bit of leeway in his maiden speech to deal with his personal situation, but I would like you to at least mention once or twice the budget during your presentation. I'd appreciate that.

I'd also like some quiet from that side. We all show due diligence when someone does their maiden speech, so I don't want to hear any mocking over here.

Continue, please.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I promise that in very, very short order, I'll be addressing the throne speech directly.

Just to finish off very quickly—the member from Ottawa South, someone who has inspired me with his leadership and ability and his dedication to the province of Ontario, and, of course, the former provincial finance

minister, the honourable Dwight Duncan, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, a gentleman for whom I served as parliamentary assistant for a very brief period of time towards the end of last year and to the beginning of this year.

To address specifically the throne speech itself and to talk about why I'm so happy and so thrilled and proud to stand here in this chamber and be in support of it: When I listened to the throne speech back a number of days ago, I was struck by how it set a very relevant and important and appropriate tone with respect to how the province of Ontario needs to move forward over the next number of years.

The underlying themes of our throne speech were very much in keeping with where this province has been going over the last nine years and needs to continue to go. It's essentially about balance, about fairness, and about being reasonable and responsible.

Over the last nine years, the Ontario Liberal government has spent a great deal of its energy, and its time, investing in both people and physical infrastructure. In fact, when I talk about physical infrastructure and I bring it back to my own community of Vaughan, I think of, again, back on September 19, my very first day in this House. I had a chance—the privilege, actually—to ask our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care my very first question, and it was a question regarding the future Vaughan hospital, a hospital that has been planned and built and will be operated by the folks at Mackenzie Health.

There have been dozens of those kinds of projects built, planned, developed around the province of Ontario over the last decade or so. That's the kind of project that I see as the product of an attitude, of an approach towards governing, that was definitely clear and evident in our throne speech.

I think of the very first chance I had to cast a vote in this chamber as an MPP. It was, I guess, at this point, a number of months ago, regarding the seniors' Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, something that I know was of great importance to the seniors living in, and the seniors' clubs that are found across, my community of Vaughan.

I think of, again, how important it is to make sure that those individuals who come before us, those individuals who have worked so hard to build our communities, to build our ridings, to build our province and country—to make sure that we don't forget them and we don't forget their sacrifice and their contribution. I know that, with that particular tax credit, we're certainly helping to honour their commitment.

The throne speech not only was founded on those principles that have helped guide this government, this side of the chamber, over the last nine or 10 years, but it certainly had a very aspirational approach or sense to it, a sense of where we want to take the province of Ontario—very hopeful, very optimistic—but making sure that we continue to invest in people, making sure that we continue to invest in infrastructure, making sure that we con-

tinue to invest in research and innovation and in a number of other areas.

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When I take, again, that approach and bring it back to my own community, I think of things like the new subway extension, the Spadina subway extension, that's coming to the community of Vaughan: a significant investment in transit infrastructure that's going to help my community leverage a brand new downtown city core, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. I think of the fact that over the last nine years, we invested in building the very first community health centre in Vaughan. That's a community health centre today that serves more than 7,000 clients, people who are learning more and more every day about how to manage chronic illnesses like diabetes, keeping them out of hospitals, keeping them out of emergency rooms.

Those are the kinds of investments that we've delivered over the last nine years. This throne speech and this blueprint will help our government move forward to continue to make those kinds of investments.

I think of the new schools, nearly 100 new schools, built in York region over the course of the last decade, with many dozens built in my own community of Vaughan. Just recently, just a number of weeks ago, I had the privilege of announcing three additional new schools for my riding of Vaughan.

These are the kinds of approaches that this side of the House takes towards governing. These are the kinds of principles that guide the decisions that we make. I know that our throne speech laid out that plan for the next while, to make sure that we keep moving in that same direction.

I think of the investments that we've poured into the Viva Rapid Transit system—tens of millions of dollars for ridings like Vaughan, for ridings like Richmond Hill and others across York region, to make sure that we give our commuters and residents many different options, to make sure that as they want to commute, as they want to get to work, if they want to get home a little bit earlier to spend quality time with their family, they have those options. Again, this is the kind of foundation that we have laid for the people of Ontario over the last decade, and the throne speech is a clear indication that we continue to move in that very direction.

Just the other day, Speaker, I had the chance to stand in this House and ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation a question about a project that's extremely important to me and to the people of my community, and that's the extension of Highway 427. I was delighted to hear the minister say to the House that he looks forward to continuing to work with me and to work with the people of my community, to make sure that that's something our government takes a serious look at.

That's important, because in that particular part of my riding, there are close to 1,500 hectares of employment land—it's known as the Vaughan enterprise zone—greenfield, potential employment land that, when fully built out, when fully realized, at its full potential, may

produce between 40,000 and 50,000 jobs for that part of the greater Toronto area. It's extremely important.

I know, again, if you look at our throne speech and you hear the direction that our government plans to continue to move in, those are the kinds of investments that I think—and I hope sincerely—that we can continue to look forward to.

Just the other day, I had the opportunity to go to the official opening of something really spectacular in my community at the Vaughan Mills shopping centre. That was the grand opening of Legoland, and what an exciting day that was. Unfortunately, it took place on a weekday so I wasn't able to bring my daughters with me, because they were at school. But when I told them all about it, they made sure that I would commit to bringing them back as soon as possible.

That's about 34,000 square feet at Vaughan Mills shopping centre, the first Legoland of its kind in Canada that has come to my community because Merlin Entertainments Group and the folks at the Ivanhoé Cambridge shopping centre company understand the importance of continuing to invest in communities like Vaughan, in provinces like Ontario. They recognize that our government is on the right track, and that with their investments and our government's investments in the crucial infrastructure and in people, we'll continue to move our economy forward. They know that we are developing the kind of business climate that's important for them so that they can continue to invest in our province.

There's also an area of the throne speech that I think is extremely important and that I want to address today. That was our consistent commitment to making sure our books are balanced here in the province of Ontario by 2017-18. That's extremely important because, as we all know, as we bring the books back to balance—and it's important to stress bringing them back to balance in a responsible and fair way, making sure that we're not slashing and burning, because we've all seen that kind of stuff before, both here in Ontario and in other jurisdictions—but making sure that we are realistic and knowing that if we bring the budget back to balance, it frees up the opportunity for us to continue to invest in people and infrastructure.

Knowing that we're on track—in fact, perhaps even a little bit ahead of schedule—with respect to our deficit reduction strategy is extremely important. That's very important to the people in my community, who want to make sure we can bring our province's books back to balance, but make sure we can do it in a way that's humane and that's something they can support.

I think, most of all, I would talk a little bit about the fact that we do have additional work to do with respect to job creation. We've certainly had a lot of successes over the last number of years. I mentioned the potential of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre when Highway 427 is built and its full potential is realized. I talked about Legoland in my community. I talked about the subway. Construction of the subway to Vaughan itself has produced and will produce thousands and thousands of construction jobs, both directly and indirectly.

I mentioned earlier the brand new downtown city core, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. We've already seen major corporations express interest in bringing head office jobs to my community; for example, KPMG, a couple hundred new head office jobs that they're going to bring to a new office tower that will be built in the Jane and Highway 7 area of my community of Vaughan. Why did they do that? They did that because they see in our government a partner that's willing to work with them to create that right kind of business environment, that appropriate climate so they can continue to invest both in York region and in the province of Ontario.

Lastly, I would talk a little bit about the fact that leadership is really important. Right now, here in the province of Ontario, we are really blessed, because we have a government that's leading the way. We have a new Premier, in Premier Wynne, and a new cabinet that's leading the way with respect to making sure we don't make the easy decisions; we make the appropriate decisions, the difficult decisions that need to be made in order to make sure our province continues to move forward. When you look at the text of the throne speech itself and you see the behaviour of this government over the last number of weeks, it's very clear to me that this is the kind of leadership that will make sure Ontario and Ontarians continue to come forward economically and socially.

When I think of the first six or so months of my tenure as MPP for Vaughan, having done four town hall meetings—I do them roughly monthly in my community; I just did one before the March break in the lovely town of Kleinburg. About 50 or so people there that night asked me questions. When they hear about our plans for balancing the books fairly, investing in infrastructure, economic development, job creation and continued investments in health care and education, they're happy to know that, here in the province of Ontario, we have a government, a Premier and a cabinet that are extremely focused and hard-working, have the right ideas and are moving our province in the right direction.

Ultimately, that's what it's all about. As I said at the very beginning of my remarks today, I'm extremely proud to be the MPP for Vaughan. It's a great community to represent. I look forward to working as hard as I possibly can over the next number of weeks, months and, hopefully, years to continue to represent the wonderful people of my community to the best of my abilities, so that we can move our own community and our entire province forward together.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to speak to the throne speech. What I'd like to speak to is not so much what's in it but what is not in it. What I often don't hear in this chamber at all—or often enough, for sure—is the subject of property rights. I'm going to take a moment to talk about that, because I think it's fundamentally important to our Western liberal democracy. Property rights are the foundation of any Western democracy, and we just

didn't hear about it in this throne speech. I want to give you a couple of examples of infringements on property rights that demonstrate the importance of it and the immense impact that this House and the legislation we produce can have on people's private property rights.

A man named Bobby Radcliffe lives in Milton; he has a 10-acre property in Milton. He called me a number of years ago in my previous job as president of the Ontario Landowners Association. His problem was that he inherited this property from his parents that he wanted to sell to do a settlement of his parents' estate and share it with his brother. They had the right to build a house on this property, so he said to a real estate agent, "Would you please sell this for me?" The real estate agent called him back shortly and said, "Well, Mr. Radcliffe, I can't sell it. Your property has zero market value because it is designated as a provincially significant wetland, which negates the market value of the property." Yet Mr. Radcliffe gets an assessment from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. of \$385,000. So he has to pay property taxes on a property that has zero market value because the government placed a land use designation on his private property.

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That is something that's very, very wrong, and it should be addressed in throne speeches and by this House at all times. Property rights are removed from Bobby Radcliffe and people all over Ontario by actions we take in this House. We speak of it precious little, and certainly it's not in the throne speech.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: First, just an opportunity to respond to my colleague from Vaughan—a good maiden speech. I share the enthusiasm you had for that day. It was very special to have family and friends here. It was really interesting because my daughter who was sitting here that morning asked, "Are you all actors?"

I think that's part of the problem that we all have, actually, is that people think we're just acting here when, really, we should be working together. We should be focused on the priorities and the strategies. Within the context of the throne speech that was delivered earlier this month, there was really a lack of substance, quite honestly.

One of the strongest emotions that I've felt since I've been here is how differently we see the world from that side of the House to this side of the House—even from this side of the House to this corner over here. When you talk to Ontarians, they're quite concerned. The reality that they face outside of this world, which is Queen's Park, is quite different from what you hear sometimes in this House.

Actually, we just met with the students from the Canadian Federation of Students. They shared some real concerns about rising tuition rates and the debt load that they're graduating with, which is why our party has decided to focus, as one of our five priorities, which are very public, on jobs for youth, because people are going

to school, they're graduating with debt loads and the jobs just aren't there. In fact, the doors are closed. So our First Start jobs strategy has a very focused, strategic approach to opening doors to jobs and connecting to education. That's where our priorities should be.

I'd like to commend the member for his maiden speech and to say that this is where the work should happen. That throne speech needs some work. That's all I have to say.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm thrilled to be given an opportunity to speak in rebuttal of my colleague and seatmate, the member from Vaughan. I was really pleased to hear his history and his road to Queen's Park. It's wonderful to hear about the supporters who came to his inauguration here at Queen's Park but, more importantly, the history he had before he came to Queen's Park and the fact that he's so passionate and caring—the true vision we have as a party but, more importantly, that here we have a member who shares with each one of us this afternoon about his contribution, his predecessor. He acknowledged those who came before him. More importantly, he also talked about the whole issue of our throne speech. The Premier and the Lieutenant Governor spoke about the economy, transportation, the infrastructure and, more importantly, about the balanced budget that we are going to bring forward because, at the end of the day, this province can only thrive and continue to prosper if we work together. The focus on the throne speech is on a balanced economy, a strong economy and making sure the infrastructure is there to support all of us.

The other piece that my colleague from Vaughan spoke about is the fact that he shared with each one of us the development, the expansion of the city of Vaughan. As somebody who worked up there for a number of years, I can tell you that this government has transformed, has improved and, most importantly, the legacy. He spoke about transportation. He talked about the hospital, the building of three new schools. That speaks volumes—the contribution of this government but, more importantly, continuing to build the province.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd also like to comment on the maiden speech of the member for Vaughan. Welcome to this Legislature. I guess, first time around on your maiden speech, we don't beat each other up. We give you a good pass and a pat on the back.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Next time.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Next time; definitely. I know you would have given a speech earlier if we didn't prorogue for four months. But congratulations. I appreciate listening to the maiden speeches and hearing about where people have come from and their family and why they're here. I totally agree with you, with the fact that we're all here for the future of this province. Either with our kids or grandkids or parents or what have you, we're looking to make Ontario stronger.

Then we're on a different path when we revert to this throne speech that you mention in your speech, and that you're on a plan moving forward. Well, the Liberal government's plan for Ontario does not work for Elgin–Middlesex–London, and I'll just touch upon—you may have Legoland in your riding, but over the past 10 years, my riding has lost jobs—factories—at Ford, Sterling, Lear, Therm-O-Disc—that's just off the top of my head—and, to top it off, in two months' time, Timken, which has been part of our community for over 60 years. It contributed a lot; we have a hockey arena named after Timken, because they gave so much money—another loss to our community.

So the current plan the Wynne government is on—the McGuinty-Wynne government, I guess, since it's going in the same direction—isn't working in Ontario. It's not working for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

I just want to make sure that's on the record here, that we need a change of direction in this province. Tim Hudak has given great plans and ideas to take us in that direction, and—

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's the McGuinty-Wynne coalition.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: And the coalition—I will touch on it really quickly, I've got 10 seconds; thanks for making that—horse racing would still be around today in strength if the NDP had actually voted down the budget last year instead of sitting on their hands.

Thanks very much.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin my two minutes by thanking the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo; of course, my outstanding seatmate, the member from Scarborough–Agincourt; and the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for their comments.

I listened very carefully to all that was said. One of the things that I didn't mention in my opening 20 minutes that I do want to talk about a little bit now, briefly, is, in listening carefully to the comments made today, but also in listening to the questions and the debate that take place here regularly, I think I want to stress—I know, in fact, Speaker, I want to stress—that a great deal of progress has been made in the province of Ontario, in York region, in my community of Vaughan, and in so many other communities over the last nine or 10 years.

But just because exceptional progress has been made—and it certainly has, in health care, in education, in social infrastructure, in physical infrastructure, in the environment, across a whole wide array of topics—does not mean that our work is done. It certainly isn't done.

Nothing of what I said in my opening 20 minutes was meant to suggest that our work is done. It's why we're here, it's why we're here doing the people's business, and it's why it is so important to go back, for the members opposite and others, to carefully review the throne speech, to see exactly how much opportunity and

promise there is in the throne speech for us moving this province forward.

Again, whether it's in areas like research and innovation, whether it's in areas like dealing with our seniors, whether it's in areas dealing with health care, education, infrastructure and transportation, a number of important challenges are facing the people of Ontario. But with a government in charge that understands the importance of being balanced and being fair and being responsible and avoiding the temptation to be too extreme, either to the right or to the left—because Ontarians are not extreme people. They want careful, moderate, responsible, balanced leadership. That's the kind of leadership they have, because of Premier Wynne and our government, and that's definitely the kind of leadership that's exemplified by the throne speech.

Once again, that's why I was so proud, and am proud, to support our throne speech.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Leeds–Grenville.

It's great to speak about this throne speech. After reading the throne speech and listening to the debate, I think we can sum up the Liberal Party with a syllogism that goes something like this: The more one works, the richer he is. The more difficulties and obstacles one overcomes, the more one works. Therefore, the more obstacles he overcomes, the richer he must be. That's what this government is all about: obstacles and obstructions and an interventionist government.

Speaker, this government wanted everyone to acknowledge a few things when they gave this speech from the throne, but there's one thing that they didn't acknowledge: their nine years of dismal, complete and unmitigated economic failure.

Let me give this House a number: 1.84%. That's how much the economy grew, per person, after adjusting for inflation. That's not 1.84% per year; that's over the Liberal nine-year regime: 1.84% under the McGuinty-Wynne government. That's the Dalton legacy that our supposedly-new Premier wants to build on.

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Here's another number: \$258 billion. That's how much debt Ontario has this budget year. That's over \$20,000 for every man, woman and child in Ontario. The moment a child is born in a hospital in Smiths Falls, in Windsor, in Kenora or in Toronto, that child is already in debt \$20,000.

Here's another number: 6.1%. That's the annual rate of spending growth under the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government. That's twice the rate of population growth and inflation combined.

The year 2009: That's the first year Ontario ever received equalization payments. That's the first time in the history of Confederation that the bedrock of Confederation, Ontario, became the laggard of Confederation.

Six years: That's how long Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average. Today, over

600,000 people awoke in Ontario without a job. That's equivalent to half the entire population of Ottawa. In January, Ontario only added to this disappointing record, losing another 48,000 private-sector jobs.

Here's another number: 5,591. That's how many people left Ontario for other provinces. In fact, all of my three sons have gone to western Canada to seek better economic opportunities than they could find in either urban or rural Ontario. Simply put, Ontario is no longer the economic engine of Confederation. This is the legacy of Dalton. It is the legacy that Premier Wynne wants to build on. It's a legacy of economic failure, debt, deficit, equalization payments, unemployment and emigration.

It shouldn't be too hard to build on this legacy. There's a simple way: Repudiate it. That's how you build on that legacy: Simply repudiate it. That's my recommendation to the Premier: If you want to build on this legacy, repudiate it. That's why the Ontario PC Party has put forward proposals to do just that.

The Premier says that she wants to put unemployed people back to work. We here in the PC Party have put those ideas forward to get Ontario back on track, to become a job creator in Canada once again.

The Liberal government seems intent on ruining good-paying jobs in the construction industry. That's why they introduced Bill 119, which forces independent contractors and operators—who are unlikely to ever file a WSIB claim, and who already have around-the-clock insurance—to pony up to WSIB. The other day, there was a contractor here in the Legislature—a young contractor who had his first child. He pays under \$50 a month for private insurance that's better coverage than the WSIB, but now he's forced to pay \$5,000 a year in addition for inferior WSIB insurance. Instead of paying that \$5,000 to WSIB, he could be putting it into a savings account for his daughter and for his family. By the time she needs to go to university, that would be near \$150,000. But he won't have that; WSIB will have it.

Others have told me that they are already feeling the heat from the underground competition—that they're being forced to compete with illegal competitors. Bill 119 and mandatory WSIB insurance for them will only drive more underground or out of business. It's hard to see how this policy of the Liberal government is designed to put people back to work.

We can look at the Liberal labour policies. What place would you hope Ontario's labour legislation would have more in common with: any one of 47 European democracies or the sole and last remaining European dictatorship? Regrettably, Ontario wouldn't be on the side of every European democracy but on the side of Belarus. Instead of taking the side of the fundamental human right of freedom of association and letting people bargain with their employers independently, which has proven throughout the developed world to create jobs and economic growth, the Liberals are taking the side of the public sector union bosses to whom they are practically married. Why put people back to work when there are union bosses they can woo?

Or we can go through their absolutely absurd apprenticeship ratios. Pretty much every province in Canada and every American state uses a ratio of 1:1 for journeymen. Ontario uses 3:1. Instead of taking our proposals, ceasing to be the odd man out and creating thousands of high-paying jobs, the Liberals would rather keep a 3:1 ratio. We would rather put Ontario back to work. As the Liberals do, they would rather please their union supporters. This government has a different answer for the 600,000 people out of work than those people would hope for.

But that's what we've grown to expect from the Liberal government: no respect at all, a lot of talk, very little or no substance. We know we can do better. We know that Ontario can do better. We also know that this government can do better. But to do better they have to start on the right track, and that is to repudiate Dalton's legacy and adopt policies that work.

That's what I got out of this throne speech. Unlike the NDP, who talk about how negative the throne speech is, we walk the talk here. We will not be supporting this throne speech. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to join in this debate, and I'm pleased to be sharing with my neighbour, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I think this gives us a good opportunity to put our comments on the record, and I appreciate a number of points he has made.

I took last week's constituency week—it was a busy schedule, and I had a number of constituency meetings. I talked to a lot of folks, including going to our agricultural community. I had a nice event with the Grenville OFA in Roebuck, I toured a retirement home in Merrickville, I had an exceptional breakfast with local mayors in Maynard to discuss economic development issues, and I also had a chance in Brockville one evening to meet with the board of Children's Mental Health of Leeds and Grenville. So I take some of those comments that folks gave me at those meetings and some of the constituency meetings in bringing forward my remarks today.

I have to tell you that I took the opportunity to reread the speech from the throne. It should be no surprise that I am no more impressed than I was the day I sat here in the Legislature. I'm very disappointed. In fact, I was critical in my local daily newspaper, the Brockville Recorder and Times, when I was asked about how I felt the McGuinty-Wynne government did with the speech from the throne. My quote at the time was, "We really needed to hear that bold action, that new direction and we didn't hear it."

I was expecting, when you have a new Premier, the opportunity to make a clean break from her predecessor under the circumstances of the fact that Dalton McGuinty resigned in this growing gas plant scandal. Even today the minister stands and corrects his record to tell further information that the government has withheld from the people of Ontario. After four months of having this place shuttered, four months that this government prorogued,

you would think that in a speech from the throne you would get some humility and perhaps even an apology from a government for taking us away from this place and taking away the right of the opposition to hold the government to account on the issue of the gas plant scandal.

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There was certainly no apology from this government on February 19 for the throne speech. There was no acknowledgement that their politically motivated decision to shutter this House and rightfully anger the people of Ontario even happened. You wouldn't even know it from any of the words in this throne speech. It's extremely ironic, however, Speaker, that the Premier chose to include this line. I'm going to quote this line from the throne speech: "Members of provincial Parliament must be conduits for their constituents, so that this Legislature can hear all the voices of this province and represent all of its diverse needs." Well, Premier, it's pretty hard to do that, isn't it, when the door of this place has been locked for four months.

I have to tell you that our caucus, the Ontario PC caucus, was expecting to hear some very solid words in the throne speech, not the empty rhetoric that we sat here and listened to that day. I think that we wanted to see some bold actions, and I'm going to get to that later on in my address.

I want to give you another quote that the Premier included in the throne speech, that "your new government believes that complex times require thoughtful, collaborative solutions.

"And that we can only surmount each obstacle by acknowledging that they are all connected.

"And that we are all connected."

I know that they've issued some style tips. They've got some guidelines where they want all of their cabinet members and all their caucus—but after I read that quote I'd love one of you, just one of you, to try to explain what the heck that means. It didn't make any sense. I'm certainly not going to use any of those style tips when I meet my local federation of agriculture in Leeds county on Friday night, because I'll tell you, if I used that type of bafflelegab, they'd be showing me the door pretty quick on Friday.

But I'm going to help you out, though. I've rewritten the line. Here's how I would have written that line in the throne speech. I would have said, "Your government understands that Ontario faces a tremendous fiscal and economic crisis. That's why our first priority is to balance the books with a series of bold and decisive actions that will once again make Ontario a place for the private sector to invest and create jobs." That's what people in my riding of Leeds–Grenville who have lost their jobs under the McGuinty-Wynne watch want to hear. That's what they wanted to hear in the throne speech—no empty words, no soothing words, no soothing tone. They want bold, decisive action on the problems that are facing Ontario.

Last week, in the break week, I heard from lots of constituents, and in fact I promised some of them that I

would bring their comments to the floor today. I want to quote one email from Margo Phillips of Brockville. It reads:

“Steve:

“Your office, that is, Pauline, has been very helpful with this issue.

“Which has boiled down to this: The chip in my meter”—she’s talking about her hydro meter—“was messed up, giving them the wrong readings. Of course, this has apparently meant that I have been underpaying all season, resulting in a March bill of \$150. This is just not in my budget.

“And I paid my bill in good faith, knowing that I might have a round-up bill to pay at season’s end, hopefully a reasonable amount. Instead I get told that I’m behind and I must pay in full, now.

“I tried to ask if I could pay a little more each month to cover it, but I was told that I needed to put up my equal billing amount for the rest of the season, and that I would have to pay the full amount of the March bill right away, no installments.”

This is the type of email and this is the type of constituent that I’ve been getting, not just during constituent week—this week, the week before, all winter long. These are the type of words—if you want words that should be in the throne speech, there should have been some words that I could have given this constituent and the other constituents when they’ve come and faced that same heavy-handed tactic.

Another email is from Heidi Bernicky, whose daughter, Rebecca, has just been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. If that diagnosis wasn’t enough for a worried mom to cope with, Heidi contacted my constituency office in despair after learning her daughter would wait over a year for a neurological specialist. Her email really captured her frustration, as she felt that the health care system puts dollars into building these LHIN bureaucracies ahead of the front-line care that she and so many constituents want. Her email:

“This is not acceptable. A year to watch her change before my eyes—the continued weight loss, muscle loss, weakness and so on. To sit on the back burner and wait...

“If Rebecca is not seen for a year, her disease will get more of a chance to get hold of her. The waiting and the worry is very stressful.”

For those people who are on a waiting list, whether it be for health care or home care or affordable housing, this throne speech offered them nothing. The only thing in the speech that gave anybody a glimmer of hope was this quote, and frankly I don’t know how it survived the final edit. Here is a quote from the throne speech: “The central objectives of your new government will be fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment—the bedrocks on which it will build.”

So you know what? We’re back, about a month, right? Here are the bills that the government has tabled to reach out to their bedrock of fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment: Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act; Bill 11, the Ambulance Amend-

ment Act; Bill 14, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act; Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act; Bill 30, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act—not one bill that deals with any of the supposed bedrocks of this government, nothing.

On the other hand, our party, the official opposition, the Ontario PC Party, as my friend from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has said, we talk the talk and walk the walk. Here are some of our bills that we’ve put forward that deal with cutting red tape, reducing government spending, and yes—wait for it—creating jobs: Bill 17, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act; Bill 19, the Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act; Bill 22, the Helping Ontarians Enter the Skilled Trades Act; Bill 25—wait for it—the Sick Days are for Sick People Act; and of course I can’t forget the member for Thornhill’s bill, Bill 5, the Comprehensive Public Sector Compensation Freeze Act, that was introduced and passed second reading, which I think, again, the government needs to get moving on. It’s something that was the will of this House, that was voted on as a private member’s bill.

And that’s not all, because we’ve made sure, from an official opposition perspective, that we’ve put some bold ideas on the table. We have added 12 white papers that we’ve tabled to get our economy moving again on a variety of topics. We’ve committed to bring more legislation forward to deal with the bedrocks of what should be happening in this province. One of them is on arbitration, something municipalities in this province have asked for, for years and years.

Rather than flowery language, we’ve put some legislation forward, we’ve tabled some white papers, engaged Ontarians in a bold discussion on getting our fiscal house in order. We haven’t given the flowery words. We haven’t tabled fluff pieces of legislation. And you know what? If you look at this document, *The Way Forward*, let’s face it, Minister, this is the way backward. This is not what Ontarians expected. This is certainly not what Ontarians expected after your government shuttered democracy for four months. You ran and hid, and people aren’t going to stand for it.

We’re tabling this. We’re not going to support this throne speech. I’m proud to vote against it. This is not the way forward in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and the member from Leeds–Grenville for their comments.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You’re welcome.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I’m going to spend my two minutes just speaking about the health care piece that my colleague from Leeds–Grenville talked about.

You know, people elected a minority this last election for a reason. It's because they want to get results, and I can tell you that these health care cuts are negatively impacting thousands and thousands of Ontarians. At the same time that this government continues to cut beds across the province, they have not made an equal investment in home care in this province.

I have emails every day. I have friends and colleagues who have been pushed out of the hospital before they were ready, leading to many readmissions and thousands of dollars of additional cost, because there aren't enough beds in the system while there isn't enough care in people's homes.

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The issue of mental health services across this province: There was a select committee in the last government—I don't know whether our members sat on that committee—and they made many recommendations. Twenty-three recommendations were made in that select committee, and only three have been acted on. The other—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The member from Welland. Stop the clock, please.

Two members here are yelling across the floor to their members here, when they could walk over or walk outside and talk to them. I can't hear the member from Welland. Last warning.

Continue.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

I did a survey back in May in my own riding, and I had 1,400 people respond to that survey. Seventy-five per cent of parents that responded to that survey reported that their child never received any mental health services in my community, and 50% of adults reported that they had received no mental health services.

We have a crisis in mental health, we have a crisis in home care, and we need to get some action on these health care files to ensure that the people of Ontario are not falling through the cracks.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to be back up so soon after my maiden speech. I listened very closely as the members opposite—

Interjection.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: —indeed—spoke just a couple of minutes ago about the throne speech. I listened to the member from Leeds–Grenville; I certainly listened to the member from Welland. I was particularly struck by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and his comments. A couple of things struck me about his comments. He went on at length—in a bit of a confusing, rambling way—regarding how our government's policies have cost jobs or have hurt the construction sector with respect to job creation.

In my experience in the riding of Vaughan—not just in Vaughan, but across Ontario over the last 10 years, I have seen nothing but exceptional support for the

construction industry here in Ontario, because of the billions and billions of dollars that our government has invested in crucial public infrastructure. I mentioned in my maiden speech a short while ago the Vaughan hospital that's going to be getting built soon, but beyond the Vaughan hospital—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Soon? How soon?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's 2014-15 for tendering. But beyond that, I look at hospitals in North York like the new Humber hospital, and stuff that we've seen all across the province of Ontario: thousands and thousands of women and men working in the skilled trades, in construction, who have benefited directly because of the decisions made by our government, as I said, in investing in crucial public infrastructure. So I'm not quite sure that I understand exactly where that member was drawing on for those experiences where our government's policies have hurt individuals working in the construction industry specifically.

But probably even more troubling for me than the construction industry comment, I thought I heard that member talk about how people should repudiate—that side wants to repudiate the Ontario Liberal government's approach to a number of policy areas, including immigration. I'm not quite sure what that meant, Speaker, but I will say, as I mentioned in my maiden remarks, as the son of immigrants—one immigrant from Italy, one from Scotland—I find it extremely troubling that the member opposite would take this opportunity today, instead of speaking about the throne speech, to talk in such a narrow way with respect to the policy that has helped build this province and build this country. I found that extremely troubling and hope that at some point that member will get a chance to clarify his remarks.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just wanted to join in the conversation and just add that a couple of the remarks that I've heard from my colleagues across the way, particularly from the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington—you know, I understand the frustration. I feel, also with the member from Leeds–Grenville, the frustration that you must have heard from your constituents back home in regard to the prorogation, a lot of the negative feedback that you've received from your constituents—just the fact that the government is going on as if it never took place, the actual accountability that is not happening, and a lot of the window dressing that we see with some of the bills and the legislation being proposed by this government.

It's a lot of the same old same old. A lot of it is feel-good bills; it gives you that fuzzy-wuzzy feeling that you have in your stomach and apparently everything—it looks good on paper, it gets those headlines. Maybe this is where the focus of this government is. I hear some of the legislation that you have brought forward. We also have brought some very good ideas, but we've done it in a different way. We want to be engaged. We are sent here by our constituents in order to do a job, and for us to take

ourselves out of the conversation really is not serving our constituents back home. So we're going to look at this throne speech in a different way and try to get results: trying to get results for youth and creating jobs for them where they need it, when they're coming out of schools; trying to work towards a five-day home care guarantee for constituents back home; getting insurance rates cut by 15% for people as well is something that we need to look forward to; and changing the rules for individuals who are on ODSP and OW so that they can keep more of their dollars when they have an opportunity to work.

So I look forward to engaging all of the House so that we can have these discussions.

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

Well, second chance for the member from Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. A second chance—the story of my life, Speaker.

Look, we're always interested in, of course, all of the speeches, but I was particularly taken by the speech from my colleague from the great riding of Leeds–Grenville. What I really was taken by was the contrast that he drew between the words of the Liberal government, that the bedrock on which they were going to build would be fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment, and how little they have done in that regard since that throne speech.

On the other hand, you've got the Progressive Conservative Party here in opposition, which has introduced a number of bills that are designed to deal exactly with those issues. Not only that, we released a number of white papers for discussion across the province of Ontario to get some valuable feedback from the people as to what we can do to turn this Liberal mess around once there is an election and, good Lord willing, we're elected as the government, because it cannot go on the way it is going.

That's what I took from it the most, that you have a throne speech—the first throne speech for a new Premier. They mentioned the words “new government,” I believe, 16 times in that throne speech.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, that's their big, new style, new government, but it's the same old same old. Nothing has really changed. The McGuinty-Wynne government is what it is. There's nothing new there for the people.

We've been here now since the 19th of February, and those are the kinds of bills that are coming forward, bills that really don't change in any dramatic way the direction that Ontario is going. We're on a downward spiral, thanks to Dalton McGuinty and his cronies over there, now being led by Kathleen Wynne, and they've done nothing in this length of time to actually try to stop that downward spiral.

It's time to take some action. Stop with the conversations; stop with the words. Let's get on with the job of making Ontario better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Leeds–Grenville has two minutes.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. On behalf of myself and the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, I would like to thank the member for Welland, the member for Vaughan, the member for Algoma–Manitoulin and certainly the very eloquent member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I want to make one comment because my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington talked about his three sons leaving the province. I also have two boys, two young men, who left this province to work in Fort McMurray. I had my son tell me on the weekend that he's seriously considering a job opportunity in another province as well.

Again, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington talked about the legacy of Dalton McGuinty and the fact that Kathleen Wynne indicated that she wanted to build upon that legacy. Well, I agree with my colleague that I shared my time with: It's a legacy of failure. I truly believe that this is not, as this document says, the way forward; it is the way backward.

There is, honestly, one party in this Legislative Assembly that has put some clear policies on the table, that is willing to make those tough decisions, whether it be through private members' business or other policy statements. We have to create jobs. We have to balance our books. We have to get our economy back on track.

We're not going to do it by the flowery language of the government opposite. We're not going to do it by sitting on our hands on a budget or supporting a government on a throne speech. We need to make those tough decisions. We need to have the convictions to implement those policies so we can get our economy back on track.

That's the commitment that I make to the people of Leeds–Grenville.

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I'm pleased to join my colleagues to vote against this throne speech.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me this chance.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's truly an honour for me to once again speak on behalf of the good people of Timiskaming–Cochrane, who chose to send me here to represent them.

I would like to start my comments on the throne speech by answering a few questions that people asked me about the throne speech.

I had a few questions about yesterday's vote. I'd like to start with that.

The throne speech—I think a lot of people don't understand what it is. It's the government's mission statement. Let's call it their mission statement. “Here are the things that we want to accomplish in the next—”

Ms. Cindy Forster: Their vision.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, their vision.

When I said that, they said, “Well, yes, but didn't they just have that a little while ago?” Yes, they did, but they decided to close the place down, so they had to have an-

other one. Basically—and we’ve heard it lots of times—it’s the new government. In political speak, they’re trying to change the channel. They’re trying to push the pause button. That’s what this throne speech was about.

It was my second while I’ve been here, but I’ve watched a few of them on TV, and you see that it’s a very important day. They line up the chairs, and all kinds of people come to watch the throne speech.

My mom was here. She happened to be here. She was in the members’ gallery. She got a bit lost, and the Speaker had to take her back to my office, but she was here.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, and you took her home. And the Speaker got the same speech that Uncle Ernie and you got.

Anyway, all the people come because they’re looking for some kind of a direction from the government. They’re looking for a direction. I think with this throne speech everybody got a word or two, and that’s part of the problem. Everybody got a word or two, but there really wasn’t a direction. It was a feel-good document, even though we are in very tough times right now. It was “The new government is going to do this”—I’m going to go through it in a few minutes, what the new government is going to do. That’s what it was. It was a feel-good document.

Everyone was here hoping they’d get their word. Yes, northern Ontario got a couple of words. Rural Ontario got a couple of words. I believe agriculture was mentioned once. I think everybody got their words, but no one really got a direction.

So, “Okay, what we should do is vote the government down on their mission statement.” I don’t think that we were sent here to do that. The government has to come up with more than a mission statement. They have to come up with more than words, and where the more-than-words come in is in the budget. That’s where the government has to put the rubber to the road.

I got a few calls last night about, “Well, wasn’t what you voted on yesterday the budget?” No, it wasn’t the budget. It was a bill so that the bills could get paid so there wouldn’t be chaos the next day.

I didn’t get sent here to vote against bills if that’s going to cause chaos. We were sent here to run this Parliament and, on the opposition side, to both critique the government and propose better ideas and eventually take them out. That’s what we were sent here to do. We weren’t sent here to create chaos. If we had voted against that bill, people wouldn’t have gotten their pensions or ODSP. That would have created chaos. That wasn’t a budget. That was an interim supply motion. Trying to make it sound like you had to vote against that if you—I think that was being disingenuous. It was being disingenuous.

For the people who ask me that question at home, there will come a time, when the budget comes down, when that vote will make a difference, and that vote is where you judge the government. But you don’t judge

the government—you watch—on an interim supply motion. Usually, that’s even a voice vote. Basically, making that a recorded vote and saying, “Oh, yeah, we’re the ones standing up for the people,” is being disingenuous to the people who put you there.

I’d like to go through a couple of things on the throne speech and a couple of issues where I would like to expand on the words a little bit, what we were hoping to see in the throne speech. I’m hoping to see something like this in the budget. I have a northern Ontario slant; I’m a proud northerner. Lots of times, you hear of problems in the north. I just heard a member of the opposition say, “You know what? My kids had to go to Fort McMurray.” My kids—I’m fortunate—work in the province, but it’s tough. Lots of those kids could come north. We have jobs. In the north, lots of places—there’s money coming out of the north into the rest of the province. We have jobs. Mining is coming back, and mining is coming back not because of policies of the Liberal government. Mining has come back because of the price of minerals. Forestry is coming back. It went through a horrible time. It’s coming back despite some of the things the government did. It’s coming back because the lumber market is coming back. There are jobs in northern Ontario. But because of our unique geographical circumstances, there are problems in northern Ontario, as well.

Interjection: There’s jobs in Windsor, too.

Mr. John Vanthof: I agree.

But where I was particularly concerned in the throne speech—there was something about how they were going to look at transportation in northern Ontario. Well, firstly, we don’t need a throne speech; we need roads that are safe. Highway 11 is closed on a weekly basis, the Trans-Canada Highway.

When I ran five years ago, I believed in the northern growth plan. The northern growth plan was something for 25 years. I was president of the federation of agriculture then. I dutifully went to all the consultation sessions. Usually, it’s a three-year election cycle, but this was a plan for 25 years, folks. We got the plan. There were actually a few lines in there about how people were concerned about the thickness of ice roads 25 years from now. Well, we’re worried about the ice on the highway last week. Those are little things but they’re—especially since this government took it upon themselves to take away our passenger rail service. It was a year ago—in three days it will be a year—that they decided to divest the ONTC. But they haven’t, to their—how do I put this?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Discredit.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. Actually, they have bungled this so badly that they have a second chance. They have a second chance because they haven’t divested the ONTC. So maybe the new government wants to hit the pause button and say, “You know what? We want to look at this again.” They talk about strategies. To me—I’ve run a business my whole life—you talk about the strategy while you still have the infrastructure in place. If the infrastructure absolutely doesn’t fit in the strategy, okay, but you don’t dump the infra-

structure and then talk about strategy; that just doesn't work.

Interjection: Who would run a business like that?

Mr. John Vanthof: No, I wouldn't run mine like that.

There was another line about how you don't want people to fall through the cracks. That one struck me too. Why that one really struck me is because since I've been here we've had the Ornge—people call it a fiasco, but we have heard a lot of times about whistle-blowers, how whistle-blowers should be protected. Trevor Kidd was in the members' gallery here, and he was one of the first people who blew the whistle on Ornge—lost his job for it. He was applauded here—a great guy. I have this in my riding right now. Whistle-blowers are being sued.

Interjection: Nine.

Mr. John Vanthof: Nine whistle-blowers are being sued by the hospital board, which is being funded by the LHIN controlled by the Ministry of Health. And in the throne speech we've got, "Boy, we're worried about people falling through the cracks." You know? But let's—

Interjection.

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Mr. John Vanthof: No, I've got no problem; if someone wants to sue somebody personally, I've got no problem. But when somebody is using my taxpayers' money to intimidate people, I've got a big problem with that—a big, big, big problem with that.

Ms. Cindy Forster: And it should be covered under the Public Hospitals Act anyway.

Mr. John Vanthof: Somebody should step in.

The one thing that constantly comes up about northern Ontario: Almost every document, big document, has got Ring of Fire on it, that mythical Ring of Fire, named after a Johnny Cash song, by the way. And the Ring of Fire is—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: It is named after a Johnny Cash song and it's got big potential for not just northern Ontario but for Ontario, yet we don't seem to be realizing its potential. We still haven't really had a clear answer on whether we're going to process this stuff here or process it in China. We don't have a clear answer on an intention of bringing the ONTC into it again. Whether we're going to go there with rail or whether we're going to go there with road: That's something we should discuss before we decide to dump the railway.

Another issue that, again, is not specifically in the throne speech but it's an issue that has to be addressed for single-industry towns, for casino towns: MPAC. It doesn't sound like—and some of us, you know, you can appeal your tax assessment on your house, if you feel the assessment is too high. You know the deadline for that is coming up—it's coming up quick. If you feel that's the case, you should do it. But we've got cases in single-industry towns where these appeals, when it comes to big companies—forestry companies, casinos—where these assessments and the reassessment basically could bankrupt the town. Those are things that have to be addressed,

and they won't be addressed by causing chaos by voting against interim supply motions. So let's be clear what we are talking about here.

Like I said previously, where the rubber is going to meet the road is going to be the budget. That is where decisions will have to be made. So no, we didn't vote against the interim supply motion because that doesn't make sense. On this side over here, we don't vote against everything just because we like voting no. You know? Here we don't. Here we look to see if what the people are proposing makes sense, and that's what we base our votes on.

In this case, in the budget we propose five things that are achievable, that would make a difference in people's lives, would make a difference in this province and would show us that the government is really serious about getting back on the right track. Because up until now, they're saying all the right things. Lots of conversation, lots of dialogue, and they're saying all the right things but we haven't seen the proof yet.

So right now, I think we're still with this side. They're saying all the right things. I'll agree with my folks on the right. They're trying to say everything to everybody, but they haven't proven anything yet. They have a chance. When the budget comes out, they have a chance. If the new Premier really wants to run a new government, she's going to have to do a few things differently.

One thing she's going to have to do—we all know she's going to have to balance the books. She didn't—the member on the other side said that they were already balancing the books. That's not true. Sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane will talk through the Chair and not have a dialogue with other members. Thank you.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for rerouting my attention, Speaker. I appreciate that.

Interjection: You were having so much fun.

Mr. John Vanthof: I was.

The new government is going to have to demonstrate that it can balance the books. Doing that, it's going to have to have realistic—not expectations, but it's going to have to come out with realistic figures and not with cheap shots like, "We're going to save \$247 million by cancelling the ONTC." That didn't happen. That \$247 million wasn't saved. They haven't realized anything from selling the ONTC. They're going to have to come up with real figures. That's really important. They're going to have to come up with real figures.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Why is it? Does no one want to buy it?

Mr. John Vanthof: That's part of the problem.

One of the biggest issues in my riding and I think in a lot of our ridings, and in northern Ontario it's maybe more acute, is home care. What we propose, the five-day home care guarantee, would make a big difference, a huge difference in people's lives, people who don't really watch us or don't really pretend to understand how government works or really care. But they're people for

whom that home care guarantee would make a big change in their lives.

One other thing we should do, or they should do: They should change the employment, the earnings rules for OW and ODSP. Sometimes, Speaker, actually people say, “Those people, they don’t like to work.” That’s not true. But the way the rules are now, they are basically forced either into the underground economy or forced not to work. I meet lots of people in unfortunate circumstances in my office, Speaker. If those rules were changed, we could give them a step up, a big step up.

One thing we’re going to have to do, or they’re going to have to do, is they’re going to have to close some corporate tax loopholes. You know what? I ran a business my whole life. Nobody likes paying tax, but everyone should pay their fair share. It’s not rocket science. There are corporate tax loopholes here. The argument always is that if we close them or if we make people pay their fair share of tax, then jobs will leave. I don’t know if they can leave at any faster pace than they have been, but I don’t believe that; we don’t believe that. If people pay their fair share of tax, and if they get a fair share of services from that tax, like our health care system—you know, our health care system saves companies a lot of money, and I don’t think they have a problem paying for that.

Another thing that’s a big issue in our area is the First Job program. I heard a comment that for the First Job program, you need an economy for that. Where I come from, we have an economy. One of our biggest problems is when you go for your first job and you need your first job. When I employed people, I wanted experience, because you have a better chance of making a profit when you have someone with experience. We believe that the government would invest in the economy by helping people get their first job, and they would be better providers in the future for the economy.

Last, Speaker, but certainly not least, as we were looking at ways to make the province run better, make the economy run better, and looking at ways to save the government money, it came to our attention—and it has come to our attention for a while—that we have made big changes, the government has made big changes, in the auto insurance industry over the last few years, but that hasn’t really filtered down to the people who actually pay the rates. We made a strong suggestion that the government should make some changes that actually make a difference to people’s rates.

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Those are achievable issues and those are issues that we’re willing to support, but without them, we’re not willing to.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his remarks. I thought it was a really good speech. There were a couple of points in there that I really liked.

I liked the part where he was scolding the Conservatives about their position on the interim supply motion, and I hope that everybody back in northern Ontario pays particular attention to that part of it. I don’t think you were here, Vic. He was really giving it to you guys on that interim supply motion. I really liked that part of the speech; it was great.

I also really liked the part of the speech where he talked about northern Ontario jobs. I can tell you that in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, we’ve had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the whole province, if not nationally, for about the last four years. It was interesting to listen to some of the Toronto members who talked about how their kids were leaving the province to get jobs. Well, this isn’t the first time this has happened; this isn’t new. People have left Ontario and people come to Ontario to get jobs. This is not a new phenomenon.

I really like the idea that the member highlighted the fact that in northern Ontario—I can tell you for my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan for the last four years, economically, we’ve been doing very, very well. One simple example is 1,200 more jobs in the last four years at one manufacturing facility, Bombardier, that was down to about 250 jobs when we were elected because the Conservatives had decided they were no longer in the mass transit game. We came into the mass transit game in 2003, and it has led to 1,200 more jobs in Thunder Bay.

To no surprise for the member, though, there is a part where I want to take a bit of offence at his remarks. He talked about how mining is getting ready to take off and made the comment that it has nothing to do with Liberal policy. Well, I’m not going to debate that here and now; that’s fine. But he went on to say that unlike forestry, the jobs are coming back, and sort of side-swiping and blaming the Liberals for what happened in forestry. I listened to that argument for nine years. I’ve offered to debate any member, any time, anywhere on the forestry file. Nobody has taken me up on it. Speaker, it’s just the opposite: We had nothing to do with the lost jobs in forestry. I still look forward to, perhaps, when somebody from the third party will take me up on the opportunity to debate that in Thunder Bay–Atikokan or in Toronto or wherever they’d like.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to congratulate the member from New Liskeard for great thoughts, a great speech. You’re right: Northern Ontario’s resources and wealth are going to be the wealth of Ontario. That will be the success of northern Ontario—and the rest of the province—in spite of the government and in spite of the throne speech. Good for you, folks, because that is the heart and core of where the wealth of Ontario comes from.

Another thing I’d like to mention that is not in the throne speech but is very important, and that I mentioned a bit earlier, is property rights and the fact that they weren’t mentioned in the throne speech and are never mentioned or acknowledged by this government. It’s the

basis of any western democracy and the success of any country.

I'd like to mention another example of a person who—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, would you like to take it outside? You've got quite a quorum going there. I can hear you over the speaker. So if you guys could keep it down, I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Lorna Greatrex owns a farm in Renfrew county that she inherited from her father, who died at an elderly age. It's—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Would the member like to retract that statement?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pardon me? Will you stand up and retract that last statement you made?

Mr. Mike Colle: I withdraw.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Lorna Greatrex inherited her father's farm in Renfrew county, Mr. Speaker. It's a 300-acre farm where she grew up. She and her two brothers wanted to sell the farm to do some estate settlement. They had a buyer who wanted to buy the farm. Unfortunately, he withdrew his offer because he found it had a land use designation placed on it as a result of the Endangered Species Act. They had wild ginseng on their farm, and this was going to mean that the use that this man—he wanted to subdivide the farm and make use of it and develop it. He couldn't do that, so he withdrew his offer. The effect for Lorna's family was that the family farm has no market value. This is a result of a land use designation from government, from the Endangered Species Act specifically. Their wealth was taken from them. This was in the public interest, but the Greatrex family had to pay the bill.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure, actually, to stand up and just to comment on my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane's 20-minute speech around what the throne speech is actually about. I think that we can all agree that it is a mission statement. A mission statement is a clear message to the rest of the province about what you're going to do, how we're going to serve the people of this province and what the strategy in place is. Clearly, there is a missing component, which is the strategy piece, and there's a lack of substance. In fact, I think if you scratch the surface of the throne speech, you get more surface, and that is a problem.

We have a very different approach than the other party. We're trying to make it work. The people of Kitchener–Waterloo, in the by-election, gave me a very clear message, and I think they gave this House a very

clear message. They said, "Get to work for us. Get some results for us."

It's no secret to the rest of the province that we have a jobs crisis in the province, that the energy sector is a mess. If you were here in question period, tempers are flaring. But, quite honestly, it's chaos. We need some answers and we need some clarity.

We've been very clear with the public. We have five priorities. We've put home care on the table for consideration, not for conversation, because I think people expect a little bit more action and less conversation. We've also put forward the auto insurance issue. I want to tell you, that is an issue that speaks to the general affordability of life in the province of Ontario, because people cannot afford for those rates to continue to go up.

Ontarians who are on OW and ODSP need a break, they need to be able to keep that \$200 when they earn it, and we have a responsibility to ensure that they can live their lives with integrity.

That's our approach. We're going to try to make it work throughout this throne speech process. And then, the budget process—well, that's another story, isn't it?

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to comment on the remarks by the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane. A good member, and we welcome him to the House; it has been a pleasure to get to know him.

He says in his remarks he's interested in working together. To use some of his own words, he says, "We were sent here to run the government; we weren't sent here to create chaos."

Even in a minority Parliament, the remarks of the member say very clearly to Ontarians that responsible adults are still making their decisions at the provincial government level. That should be encouraging for all Ontarians.

Even as mining and forestry come back, to use, again, the member's words, "We have an opportunity to see whether or not two visions of how Ontario's future will unwind can possibly arrive at a consensus."

Ontario's throne speech is that vision. The budget is a plan we can discuss. Now the PC caucus, of course, has dealt itself out of Ontario's future. They've said that they're going to vote against a budget that hasn't even been written. So maybe the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and his colleagues can share enough in common with the government to craft an action plan to take our 13-million-member Ontario family a step or two closer into that future.

I welcome very much the member's thoughts and insight. He has stood up and been very measured in his remarks and very responsible in his remarks throughout his time in our Ontario Legislature. I say let's keep looking at what makes sense. I think we should, if we do that, come up with a vision that Ontarians can understand, that Ontarians can share, and that will be a road map for this province going ahead in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane has two minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd first like to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

To the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I agree with some of the things he said, not all. I think there are things we can do to make things work better in the forestry industry. I've got a mill in my riding that can't seem to get wood even though they've got a ministerial directive. There's a thing where we've got, basically, government policy definitely not helping.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's a problem.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a problem. That's a problem we could fix.

1750

As far as us having a shared vision with the government and walking hand in hand down the garden path, I don't think that that—we were sent here, all of us, to help run this province. From our side, yes, we aren't saying no before the budget's written because you know what? That doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense.

What we've done is, we've laid down five things that are achievable that will give immediate results to the people who desperately want some leadership. That's what we're doing here.

So here are five things that will make a difference in your life. Are they everything we would deliver if we were government? No. But they're five things that would make a difference. Those are five things that we can vote for. But the endless dialogue and conversation and feel-good bills, that's not something that we're going to continue to support.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me. I'm happy to speak on the throne speech.

I read the throne speech over, and picking up on a comment that the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane said, he referred to—quite properly so—the throne speech as a mission statement. It was a vision statement, and I quite agree with the member opposite's characterization of what a throne speech is all about.

When we read through the throne speech and we try to discern what the mission statement is, what the vision statement is implicit in the throne speech, what is it? I read through the throne speech, and it's broken down into four or five headings. The first heading set out and emphasized in the throne speech was “A steady hand and a bold vision.” What do you discern from that comment, a “steady hand and a bold vision”? Well, it's quite clear that the steady hand is a reference to the Premier's and this government's commitment to keep an eye on the books of the province, to balance those books, as we've said, over a period of a few years and to recognize that the province has to be fiscally managed in a very, very responsible way. That's the steady hand part of it.

The bold vision part of it is, if we get the economy in order and we manage our finances well, we will be able to act on the bold vision that we have for Ontario. And what is the bold vision?

The bold vision is set out in the next heading in the throne speech, and it's entitled “A sense of community.” A sense of community means treating everyone in Ontario fairly, no matter what their socio-economic status is, no matter what their health status is, no matter what their education needs are, no matter what their ambitions are for themselves and for their families. The bold vision part of the throne speech is to enable all Ontarians, whatever their circumstances, to enjoy their life, to maximize their participation in our cultural, social and economic life to the maximum.

So it goes full circle, then, back to the steady hand mission statement in the throne speech, and that is that we can only achieve that bold vision to better everyone in Ontario if we've got a rock solid economy. Those are the first two commitments in the throne speech.

The throne speech then goes on—another heading—and gets in a little more detail about just what this bold vision is. Well, the throne speech speaks next of a “New sense of community.” You know, for a long time—and it's probably also evidenced in this chamber itself because alas, it's no secret that the last little while in this chamber, and particularly the last number of months, there's been a lot of rancour in this chamber, and a lot of that rancour is also reflected out in the streets of Ontario.

What the throne speech envisions as a mission statement, a vision statement, is that somehow all Ontarians are going to pull together to meet these challenges referenced at the beginning of the throne speech: the steady hand on the economy and the bold vision for our society. But do you know where we have to start to develop that new sense of community? The members of this chamber have got to demonstrate leadership right here within these four walls with these three political parties here: the Liberals; the official opposition, the Conservatives; the third party, the NDP. If we can't pull together in this chamber with a new sense of purpose, with a new sense of community, with a common vision about how we're going to restore and fix our economy and how we're going to make life better for all Ontarians, if we can't do it here, what are the chances of being able to achieve that ambition outside of this chamber? That's why we, as individual members in this chamber—whatever our political parties, our responsibility as a political party and our responsibility as individual members of provincial Parliament representing our respective ridings—have got a real added responsibility to demonstrate leadership in that regard. That's the whole spirit of the throne speech.

The throne speech then goes on to speak on a third topic, elaborating on this sense of community: a fair society. It gets into a lot of details about what we will do in health care, what we will do in education, and what we will do in my ministry, which is aboriginal affairs, what we'll do to improve the lot of the aboriginal community, Métis and Inuit.

The throne speech, then, to come back to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who hit it right on the head, is a mission statement; it's a vision statement. I hope that when we're debating this throne speech, we will recognize that that's the job of a throne speech: to fire up our collective imagination, to put the challenge out there, especially in these trying times, the challenge that we in this House exercise that leadership; that we expect all Ontarians—whether they're in the business community, in the health care community, in the teaching community, in the construction community, in the public service—to all join hands with us and get things right in this province, both the economy and our commitment to all of our citizens. They go hand in hand. They cannot be separated.

With regard to the messages in the throne speech, let me just reference a couple of comments that have been made in the press. Here's Mark Wales, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. This is his reaction to the throne speech: "I really look forward to working with ... [the] Minister of Rural Affairs and ... [the] Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food to make sure that we take what is the number one industry in this province—agriculture, agri-food and agri-business. So I look forward to the opportunity to work with this government and making sure that we can get things done better for everyone."

Carol Wilding, the president and CEO of the Toronto Region Board of Trade: "Toronto Region Board of Trade is encouraged to hear the government is committed to addressing our region's infrastructure challenges. As the government said in the throne speech, we can no longer be mired in political rhetoric nor waste our time stuck in traffic. The question today is not if we need new revenue tools, but which ones."

I have a handful of quotes here from the Ontario builders' association, hospital CEOs, a cross-section of our leadership in the community, and they have all commented positively on the mission statement and the vision statement in the throne speech. We, as members of this House and members of our respective political parties, should get together and exercise leadership in this regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, the minister will continue when this debate continues later on.

Debate deemed adjourned.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Halton has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer received on March 7 from the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation concerning the Niagara-to-GTA highway.

The member has five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may take up to five minutes to reply.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday, March 7 of this year, I asked the Premier why, when she was Minister of Transportation, she told Burlington residents that the new highway across the Niagara Escarpment, a biosphere reserve, which would gouge another gap through that precious piece of land—why she told people that that highway through the Niagara Escarpment and through north Burlington would be cancelled when she had no intention of cancelling this option.

She said, "What I said was that I acknowledged that there was a lot of concern about the corridor that was being identified for that road. What I promised was that we were going to do everything possible to make sure that we had an integrated transportation plan for that region... and how can we make sure that public transportation is part of any plan going forward? That's what I said to the people of Burlington, Mr. Speaker."

Well, Mr. Speaker, the facts don't quite jibe with that. The press report of the time—the meeting was held on July 26, 2011, at Springer House in Burlington. This is what the Premier said when she was Minister of Transportation at that time. First, "Wynne assured local politicians and citizens' groups gathered at the round-table meeting that the provincial Liberals aren't moving forward"—not moving forward—"with a 33-kilometre highway that connects Highway 403 in Ancaster to north Burlington."

Second, she said, "People need to move around. There is congestion on the roads and we need to address that. But we don't need to destroy environmentally sensitive land in order to do that."

Thirdly, she said, "The fundamental thing I hear is that people in this community are very concerned about a road that will disrupt a sensitive environmental area that really is the basis of the quality of life in the area. That's why our government stepped back from this."

Fourth, she said, "That detailed work"—on that highway route—"has not been done because we're not moving ahead with it."

Fifth, she said, "We have to be much more intelligent about the decisions we make on transportation."

Five times she denied the highway was going forward. St. Peter only denied Christ three times.

A year later, on July 10, 2012, a Burlington Post article said, "What a difference a re-election campaign can make."

"Almost exactly one year ago"—and then it goes on to say the five promises that the now Premier, then Minister of Transportation, made. "But we don't need to destroy environmentally sensitive land" to build that highway. "That's why our government stepped back from this." "Because we're not moving ahead with" this road. "For Burlington and Halton residents ... Wynne's words elicited a huge sigh of relief"—applause at the time and votes in the coming election.

“Last week”—this was July 2012—“Halton regional councillors were shocked to learn from Ministry of Transportation (MTO) project coordinator ... that a new highway corridor running through north Burlington to connect Highway 403 to Highway 407 is still on the books.”

The coordinator “explained his department has never been formally directed to remove any of the options for a new highway that predated Wynne’s promise that Halton escarpment land would be preserved.

“There has been no change in direction,” he “told flabbergasted regional councillors....”

Last month, in February 2013, at a public meeting in Ancaster, the MTO held its wrap-up meeting for the environmental assessment process. The highway across the escarpment and through north Burlington continues despite the Premier’s promise to cancel it for political purposes. The people of north Burlington were misled.

I’m saddened that politics in Ontario have fallen to this level. When revealing all the written documents on this broken promise, it is clear Ms. Wynne, now Premier, then Minister of Transportation, misled the people of Burlington for political advantage. To the Premier, this highway is not needed, this highway is not wanted. Do the right thing: Cancel the highway as you promised to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I would ask the member from Halton to withdraw the one statement he made.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Now the parliamentary assistant has five minutes.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker.

It’s a pleasure to rise today to have the opportunity to respond to the member’s question. Let me say that I don’t agree with very much that he said there, but it is an issue—I will agree with him that it’s a very important issue to the region of Halton and certainly to the city of Burlington and to the town of Oakville, as well.

It’s so important—I remember when I was still on regional council, the Progressive Conservative Party announced that it wanted to build a highway through the Niagara Escarpment and I was the first person to rise at the region of Halton and suggest that this might not be a good idea for the region of Halton, that a highway through the escarpment was probably not a good idea and that the Progressive Conservative government that proposed it should maybe rethink it.

Now, our government knows that a strong economy needs a modern transportation network. It needs to move goods; it needs to move people. People have to move to jobs; people have to move to purchase, for trade and all

sorts of other things. A modern economy also needs a transportation system that simply gets people home and back quickly. In order to deal with the anticipated growth within the province, and specifically the GTA, our government has been planning for the future all over the province. Not in this area, but let me be very clear: Unlike the previous government, unlike the Conservative government, we are not building a highway through the Niagara Escarpment.

Now here’s a quote, though, that I have for you from the PC leader, the current PC leader, Tim Hudak, who says not only is he in support of it, it’s actually a priority for the Ontario PC Party. He says that building a highway is the preferred transportation and a priority for the Ontario PC Party. Anybody that perhaps thinks that needs to be checked up on, if you go to 1310news.com of May 2011, here is the quote from PC leader Tim Hudak: “I’ve committed to building a new highway along the mid-pen corridor. It’s what I’ve stood for.”

Now, I appreciate the honesty of the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. He’s told us exactly where he stands on this. He can stand or he can fall on that idea. I’ll tell you, in the region of Halton it’s not perceived as being a very good idea, and I think that the PC leader might want to go back and rethink that.

Environmental assessments, by nature, are required to look at all the available options that make sense. We have to have all the facts on the table, and all of the options being on the table is the only way you can make a good decision. So how we tackle the problem of congestion—I don’t think anyone denies it’s a major trade route, it is congested and we need to have a solution to that for the health of all our communities. But in order to make those decisions it’s absolutely critical that we assemble all the facts.

So let me be clear again, one time more: No matter what PC leader Tim Hudak wants, this government is not building a highway through the Niagara Escarpment. We’re listening to the community through the current consultations on the recommendations that are being made by the Ministry of Transportation. These include highway expansions, widening existing highways and only building new ones where it makes sense for Niagara and the greater Toronto area.

Once again, we are not in support of PC leader Tim Hudak’s suggestions, ideas, priority and commitment to build a highway through the Niagara Peninsula.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): End of business for the day. This House stands adjourned until 9 o’clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1809.

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Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
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Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
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Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
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Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
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Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
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Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
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Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
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