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of Debates
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**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 21 February 2013

Jeudi 21 février 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 February 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 février 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 20, 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 Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's—

Applause.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you.

It is my pleasure to respond to the speech from the throne that was read by the Lieutenant Governor a couple of days ago, on behalf of New Democrats here in the Legislature.

I think the first thing to note is that the speech from the throne was a far-ranging document. It was quite broad and quite vague, but New Democrats are going to take the Premier at her word when she talks about a number of things that we want to see achieved in this session, including the upcoming budget. I'm going to give you a little bit of detail about that, Speaker, because I think it's really clear here in Ontario that Ontarians have been waiting far too long for action on a number of the problems that they face.

We know that this place was suspended—right?—this place was prorogued. It was put on hold while the governing party, the Liberals, spent a number of months putting their own house in order, getting their own business figured out. In the meantime, everybody else in the province was put on the back burner. That's not good enough, Speaker. We didn't want that to happen. We didn't think it was necessary. But here we are finally, five months later, back to business here in the Legislature. And the throne speech, I think, is something that the New Democrats are taking with a grain of salt.

Speaker, I should let you know that I'll be sharing my time this morning with my government House—or my House leader, Gilles Bisson—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Government House leader is good.

Ms. Andrea Horwath:—government House leader, that's [*inaudible*]*—*as well as the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, Catherine Fife.

Anyway, back to my comments. The reality is, the people of this province have been waiting far too long for their problems to be solved. The Liberals enjoy solving their own problems. They enjoy spending time on their own issues. They enjoy taking care of their own political skin and their own political back, but when it comes to the problems Ontarians face, not much has been done. In fact, I would say nothing at all has been done, and we know that nothing has been done in the last several months—that's for sure.

So what am I talking about when I talk about the problems that Ontario people, Ontario families, Ontarians are facing? We have a youth unemployment rate in this province of 15.7%—almost 16%. That's far too high. We see article after article, more and more research coming out, that indicates very clearly that when young people have to delay or are forced to delay their connection with their careers, their connection with the workplace, it has many, many negative effects.

First and foremost, an obvious effect is that, of course, young people end up, by the time they're finished their working lives, having been very seriously disadvantaged in terms of their lifelong earnings if they're not able to engage in meaningful work and their career-oriented work at an early enough time in their lives. But that's only the financial issue, Speaker. We know that young people suffer from great issues and problems around self-esteem, around worrying about the future, stress, mental health issues. All of these things come to bear when young people are unable to find their first attachment to the workforce or their first experience in meaningful work.

So we think this is a problem that has lasted far too long. New Democrats have, for several years now, been bringing to the table, here in the Legislature, a number of ways to increase employment, to deal with the jobs crisis in this province overall. The government stubbornly—the Liberals stubbornly—refused to take any of our suggestions and implement them. That's not good enough, Speaker, because people have suffered in the meantime.

There has been no jobs plan from the government. In fact, the only jobs plan they had was an HST that was supposed to bring 600,000 jobs and instead brought none and instead made life more difficult for the people of this province. It made them have a more difficult time in terms of making ends meet, Speaker.

I want to say that our ideas on job creation overall have been ignored. We've gone nowhere in this province in terms of job creation. So we still want them to implement the job creation ideas that we've brought forward.

But now we are adding another piece to that, another layer to that, and that is making sure that we actually specifically attack youth unemployment. We've got a real serious problem there, and we've got a real, I think, smart idea in terms of how we can engage corporations, engage businesses, in working with us to put young people to work. We call it the First Start program. It's a sensible program. It's a wage subsidy program that encourages businesses to provide meaningful work for young people. So there would have to be a training component. There are many more details, which are easily described, and I'm sure the government is quite aware of what those are.

But as I was saying, one of the other problems that people are facing—with the HST and with all of the new kinds of burdens that the Liberals have put on the families of this province while not paying attention to the fact that they were losing their paycheques or having their paycheques reduced—is the fact that life has become extremely unaffordable. In fact, everywhere I go, people are very, very worried about the future. They feel like they're losing ground. They know that they are losing ground.

I'm not sure if you know this, Speaker, but in 2011, there was in Ontario—one of the only provinces in the country where this happened—actually a reduction in the average wages in our province. People actually really did lose ground. Wages went down in Ontario. That's a shameful thing to have happen.

So it's not just people's imagination that life is becoming tougher. We see in the papers all the time the fear, the worry around people's household debt increasing. Why is the household debt of average families in this province increasing? It's because they cannot make ends meet, and they're trying to hold on to a decent quality of life. So they turn to their lines of credit or their credit cards or other credit instruments to try to maintain a decent quality of life. That's a shameful record for the Liberal government. They've continued to make life more difficult for folks and they've continued to make the future more insecure for the people of this province.

What we want to do, what New Democrats want to do—on top of putting young people back to work and partnering with companies to do that—we want to make life more affordable for people.

We talked about that last year as well. We wanted to see the HST come off of home heating bills. Again, the Liberals refused to make life more affordable for people. So this time we're saying, "Okay. You refuse to make life more affordable for people, but we have a good idea." We have an idea that says to the government, "You've changed policy in terms of the auto insurance industry. You've made sure that the auto insurance industry has benefitted very much financially from the policy changes that the Liberal government has put in

place"—to the tune of \$2 billion in extra profits because of the way that the system was adjusted by the Liberal government.

None of that \$2-billion windfall that the Liberals handed the insurance industry was passed on to the consumers. Not a single dime was passed on to the consumers in savings. You know what? In the province of Ontario—everybody knows it—we don't have a choice. If you are going to drive a car, you must have auto insurance. So then why is it that public policy, Liberal-style, is all about making sure insurance companies do better instead of making sure that something that we require people to purchase is in fact affordable? It makes no sense. It sounds like it's more insurance industry policy as opposed to public policy.

0910

The Liberals have been on the wrong track for a long time and I'm hoping that I see in this budget upcoming a big difference in terms of their direction. Nice words, nice promises in a throne speech, but the rubber hits the road in a budget, and in that budget I want to see affordability measures, particularly on auto insurance, and I want to see a real jobs plan to get young people back to work.

The other thing we know that continues to be a problem in this province is the health care system. Again, we hear all the platitudes, and we see the government proudly speaking about the achievements that they think they've been able to bring to Ontario in terms of health care reform, but I've got to tell you, wherever I go in Ontario, that's not the way people see it. You know, we go to some communities in northern Ontario, and people are waiting 262 days for home care services. Now, how on earth can somebody wait for 262 days for home care service? How on earth can we not expect that to create a crisis for that individual and end them back up in hospital? It happens and that's why we have a revolving door when it comes to our hospital sector, and the pressure that we have on emergency wards is because, frankly, the home care system is a mess. The Liberals have actually allowed it to continue to be a mess.

What we want to do is we want to make sure that every single person in this province who is assessed and is qualified for home care is able to get that home care within five days—a five-day guarantee for home care, again, another thing that this government needs to put in the upcoming budget, because obviously it's something that they have allowed to fall apart, frankly, here in Ontario. It's an extremely, extremely important service that people should be able to rely on, not only at some point in time but in a very appropriate time frame—within five days of being assessed as needing it.

There's another big piece to what we see as a problem here in Ontario. There has been a complete lack of balance with Liberal budgets. We've seen this year after year after year, where Liberal budgets and Liberal policies tend to favour certain sectors that they like and that they enjoy a cozy relationship with, while everyday

families are left to languish and not have their needs met and not have their concerns and issues addressed.

One of the things that we think is a smart thing to do is actually to deal with some of the corporate tax loopholes that currently exist in this province. What we believe is that we can achieve some of these improvements for everyday families if we close up some of those corporate tax loopholes and make sure that everybody, every person and every business, is actually contributing to the well-being of our province. There is no reason to allow billions of dollars to escape, if you will, into the ether without thinking seriously about how we capture those dollars and put them to work for Ontarians.

So there are a number of things that can be done in that regard. We've talked about, obviously, making sure that when companies are making profits here in Ontario, that those profits are actually taxed here in Ontario, so that companies are not allowed to move their profits and losses around the country to be able to find the best tax rate, to be able to declare them in the province where they can get the best deal.

Similarly, we don't think that they should be able to move their profits to sister companies offshore in other countries. Again, if you are earning your profits here in Ontario, you should be paying the appropriate taxes to our system. Now this isn't rocket science, Speaker, and it's not unfair. In fact, the government's own guru, who was trying to get them to think about some of the ways to make this province a little bit more fiscally stable last year, Mr. Don Drummond, gave them that very advice. There's not a lot of stuff—you wouldn't be surprised to know there's not a lot of stuff that I agreed with in Mr. Drummond's report, but there were a few little nuggets and that was one of them; to make sure that companies actually pay their taxes here in Ontario. I don't think it's much to ask, and I think regular Ontarians would think it's only fair that that happens.

Then we have another couple of things. We have a government that in 2015 is ready—is just waiting—to be able to open up a new tax loophole for corporations.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We can't afford that.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We simply can't afford it. Mr. Bisson, the member for Timmins–James Bay, is in fact correct. At this time, we cannot afford the largesse of having companies in 2015 able to write off their HST on entertaining their clients—on going to dinners and having drinks and going to entertainment venues. This kind of thing is not happening right now; this is a new loophole that is intended to be implemented in 2015, and I would ask the Liberals and the Premier to think very carefully if that's where we want to invest our dollars.

Do we want to invest our dollars in an HST rebate for companies while they wine and dine their clients, or would we rather ask those companies to work with us to put young people back to work and give them that kind of reward? Give them a reward when they put young people back to work or put young people to work for the first time, instead of giving them a reward when they wine and dine their clients. To me, Speaker, it's a simple,

balanced and smart approach. It's about your priorities. New Democrats know what our priorities are. I hope that the Liberals have changed their priorities and are starting to think about how to make life better for everyday Ontarians, because that really is our job here, believe it or not.

There's another issue around the employer health tax, which we think is a good program for small business. It helps strengthen small business. It helps relieve them of a little bit of pressure as they struggle, because we know small businesses have a difficult time, especially in their first couple of years. It's a difficult thing for small business to stay up and running, and one of the ways that government can help them is by relieving them of the pressure of the employer health tax. You know what? We support that for small business.

But one of the things that's happened is, of course, that the first \$400,000 of payroll exemption from the employer health tax has been extended to big, large, huge, profitable corporations—banks, insurance companies, you name it. Well, you know what, Speaker? Is that really necessary? We don't think so. We think that a small business program that's aimed at helping small business should be in place, but it's not necessary for big business. Big business should be paying the employer health tax from the first dollar of wages that they're paying for their employees. So we think that's another loophole that the government needs to close.

The bottom line is that New Democrats want to see a real change in direction from the Liberals. Liberals talk a good talk, but when it comes down to walking the walk we have not seen the results that the people of this province deserve, and time's a-ticking. The election was almost—what is it now?—a year and a half ago, and literally nothing has been done, or very little has been done, for the people of this province. A lot has been done for the Liberal Party. They've had a lot of time to do their own stuff and do their own thing and feel good about it. Well, I've got to tell you: The people of the province aren't feeling all that good. They're feeling, rightfully so, that they've been ignored and that they've been allowed to languish in the wilderness while the Liberals take care of themselves and their friends.

As I said, I'm encouraged by some of the language in the throne speech, Speaker, but I think that vague promises are simply not enough. We want to get results. We want to see results. And we want to make sure that the budget is a document, unlike the throne speech, that actually gets results for the people of Ontario.

You know, I have to say that I think the people of the province have gotten to know me well enough to know one of the things I prefer to do is actually listen to what they have to say and pay attention to what their concerns and problems are. I've said it often, and it's a funny thing, that we politicians need to do that a little more—you know, keep our mouths shut and our ears open. It's something that I actually have been doing for some time now, even before my political career, because I believe people actually have great insights into what faces them,

particularly in terms of their problems, but also great ideas in terms of solutions that are potential resolutions to some of the problems they face.

It seems to me that this is a piece of advice I could probably give the Premier right about now. The Premier likes to talk about talking. She likes to talk about conversation; it's all about the conversation. I've got to tell you: For the people of the province, the time for conversation is waning. It is time for action. It is absolutely time for action. It's time to actually put in place some real changes that are going to positively affect the people of this province.

0920

We believe that the program or the ideas or the proposals we've put forward are very practical proposals. They're extremely affordable proposals, and they are achievable proposals in the very short term. These things can be achieved in the short term with the will and the action of this government, and I'm certainly hopeful, Speaker, that we're going to see that action. We can actually achieve these results without cutting anywhere else. We can achieve these results simply by putting in place all of the things that New Democrats have brought forward.

I look forward to the next couple of weeks. I look forward to an open and transparent budget process. I look forward to a budget document that reflects our ideas, that puts into action these changes that Ontarians have been waiting far too long to see—changes that will strengthen health care, changes that will make life more affordable for the people of this province, changes that will bring fairness to our fiscal situation here in Ontario and changes that will take a real effort, putting young people back to work.

It's not a huge list, Speaker. It's a practical, achievable road map to actually get some results for the people of Ontario, and that's what we're here to do. That's what New Democrats committed to do the day the people of this province chose a minority government. We have been rolling up our sleeves. We have been working very hard. We have been bringing practical, smart ideas to the table.

The government now needs to take action. The ball is in the government's court. The Liberals need to decide: Is it action time or is it just more time for talk? Is it time to put the people of this province on the front burner or is it time to leave them in the dust the way you've done for the last several years? That's the choice that's in front of this Premier. It's a clear choice; I hope she makes the right one. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, how do I follow up on that? That was pretty clear. I thought that was pretty concise, and it was a pretty practical message that speaks to the need to be able to do things for Ontarians in their day-to-day lives.

Sometimes people forget around this place—sincerely, I think this government has lost its way over the last nine

years—to remember what we're here for. We're here for the people back home, the people we represent in our constituencies, and not only in our own constituencies but the people who live in Ontario. It's about making laws and doing policies that affect people back home in a positive way. This government, for whatever reason, over the last nine years that they've been in power, has lost sight of that.

They were elected with great fanfare, great excitement, great expectation, but it seemed on their way to the cabinet room they forgot why they were sent here, and that was to ensure that the people back home know that when a government is making a decision here at Queen's Park, it's making that decision in a balanced way that recognizes the fiscal realities of this province but also recognizes that people back home have to balance their budget books too.

When people back home are hurting on the financial side because, as our leader, Andrea Horwath, said, the real income in this province has dropped over the last number of years, the people back home say, "You know what? All I know is that I work harder, I work longer and I'm falling further and further behind." Some, unfortunately, don't even feel that they're secure in the job that they've got, and some are looking for their first job. So they want to see these politicians at Queen's Park, in this place, do what is important for them back home, because it is really all about that.

We have laid out—Andrea Horwath, as our leader—a number of things that we want to see done in this budget cycle. Now, I listened, as everybody else in this Legislature did, to the throne speech the other day. I've got to say there was something in there for everyone. It was a typical sort of Liberal throne speech where they try to touch all the points so that people back home could say, "Oh, they've talked about something for me." I think that's a good start, but there wasn't a heck of a lot of detail about what it is they were going to do in order to achieve anything that was spoken to in the throne speech.

As Andrea Horwath, our leader, says, we're hopeful that what the Premier is saying when she says, "I want to reach across to the opposition parties, both the Conservatives and New Democrats, to look at how we can do some of these things"—we're going to take them at face value, that they're actually going to try to do that. But we're putting you on warning: You have to do that. If you just engage in a discussion, if you just engage in dialogue, if you just engage in the discussion, as the Premier seems to be saying she wants to talk to everyone—what we need to see is the walk, not just the talk. We need to know that, in the end, there are going to be some real results for people back home.

I'm going to speak to a couple of the issues that we have within the ideas that we've put forward, and I want to start with home care because it is something that I think we're all dealing with in our own constituencies back home.

I'm going to give you a couple of examples. Velma, who lives in the city of Timmins: She's been in the

papers, so I can talk about her story and I got permission to talk about it. She lives in an apartment building in Timmins and she has severe arthritis. All she needs to have to be able to live at home independently and not have to cost the taxpayers a lot of money and an ALC bed at the hospital or in a long-term-care facility, is to make sure somebody comes in and bathes her a couple of times a week and does her laundry.

Poor Velma got sick a while back—she had those services. She landed in the hospital, and because she was out of the long-term-care system for a while, the community care system, when she went back home they did a reassessment and said, “Velma, we’re going to send somebody to do your bath.” She said, “Well, that’s nice, but who’s going to do my laundry? Can’t you notice I can’t use my hands?”

It’s amazing what this woman does. I went to visit her in her apartment with our intern who was with us last fall, and this woman keeps an immaculate, spotless, clean apartment. I don’t know how she does it because she is really facing a lot of physical challenges because of her arthritis and other health conditions that she’s got. But the one thing that she can’t do is pick up the laundry, go downstairs in the building, throw it in the washing machine, pick it up, put it in the dryer and bringing it back up on her own.

So she says, “Listen, I used to get that from the CCAC.” The CCAC says, “Here’s the assessment. We can’t do that anymore because we’re having to manage within the existing budget we’ve got. We don’t have enough money to take care of people who have more acute needs, so we’re going to take services away from those people like you who seem to be doing better in their daily life.” She was without any laundry services for a long period of time.

She went to the paper. She went to her MPP. She went to the mayor. She went to everybody in town who would listen to her, and together—the mayor, myself and others—we worked hard along with the CCAC to try to find a solution. I’m glad to say we finally got her her laundry services, but do you know how much work that was, that that woman had to go through? No citizen in this province should go through what Velma had to go through to get their washing done. That should be an automatic. Why should she have had to have gone through all of that? How many other Velmas are out in Timmins or Oakville or wherever it might be in this province, who may not be doing the kind of advocacy that Velma did for herself, who are sitting back home, not getting the services they need?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Where do they end up?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, they end up in a long-term-care facility, as Andrea Horwath says. They get sick, they get worse, they land in a hospital at \$700 to \$900 a day. We stabilize them. There are no long-term-care beds, so we put them in an ALC unit at \$700 a day, and six months to a year later they end up in a long-term-care bed. For a question of maybe 50 bucks a week, we’ve ended up costing the public system hundreds of

thousands of dollars that we wouldn’t have had to spend if we would have given the laundry services when they asked for them.

I got a call from Madame Chevalier in Kapuskasing—same kind of story. She came out of the hospital after Christmas. She has been reassessed. She has lost somebody to go do her shopping. She can’t go do her shopping; she’s physically unable to go to the grocery store to do her shopping. She says, “Listen, you’re coming into my apartment. You’re doing my housekeeping, you’re doing my bath. Can you please go and do my shopping?” No, they don’t want to do it. So we’re having to go through it again. The mayor, the MPP, the MP, Monsieur Chevalier: Everybody is going to get involved. We’re going to go through the whole process again, and I’m sure in the end we’re going to get her her groceries, but why should Madame Chevalier go through the same thing? I don’t want to spend my time over and over again—and neither do citizens of this province—trying to do what are normal things.

So we’ve put together a very practical solution. We’ve said, listen, there are ways of being able to rejig money in the budget and get some of that from the elimination of some of the tax loopholes that you’ve created for some of your business friends, and put that money into a system that says, “Within five days you can get an assessment, and get a fair assessment, so that you can get the services you need.”

That is not a cost item; that’s going to save you money because in these two cases alone, if those people don’t get or didn’t get the service they need, they’re going to fall on the health care system and cost us much more money once they end up in the institutional side.

I say what we’ve put forward is something that is practical, something that is doable, something that is achievable, something that saves us money—something that doesn’t cost us money. We’re saying to the Premier across the way, “Listen to what New Democrats and Andrea Horwath have asked for.” We’re asking for something that’s going to make a real difference in people’s lives, for people like Velma, Madame Chevalier and many other people out across the province.

0930

The other big issue is the youth unemployment issue. It’s the same issue no matter where you are in the province. I’m lucky; I come from a part of the province where one part of my riding is doing extremely well. If you’re in Timmins—the price of gold is \$1,600 an ounce. It’s pretty hard for the government to screw that up. It’s pretty hard for the government to do something that will hurt the mining industry when it’s \$1,600 an ounce. You guys have tried a couple of times, but \$1,600 an ounce is a way that—how would you say?—compensates for some of the mistakes that are sometimes done here at Queen’s Park.

So in a place like Timmins, you have virtually—it’s like a mini Fort McMurray. There are employment opportunities. If a person has the proper training, they’ll be able to get into a job that pays \$60,000, \$80,000,

\$150,000 a year. But it's to get that first job. And you can't blame the employer. If I'm Placer Dome or I'm Detour Lake gold or I'm De Beers or Lake Shore or whoever it might be, or one of the supply companies, you want to be able to get up and hire somebody who's got the skills that you need now. Unfortunately, those people are becoming harder and harder to find. Why? Because with the \$1,600 gold—in places like Sudbury, where base metals are doing okay, there's a lot of employment in the mining industry, plus what's happening in the oil patch. You've got a lot of people going west to get jobs in the oil patch. So the skilled, qualified people are no longer as available as they used to be.

Plus, people like me, who went through—actually, I'm one of the lucky ones; I went through the system of apprenticeship when we were hiring apprentices. But we don't hire and train apprentices the way we did before. So these companies are having a hard time trying to find electricians, mechanics, skilled tradespeople, qualified people to work on their equipment. Therefore, it is a real problem for young people to get a job, because what happens is they go knocking at the door and the employer says, "What experience do you have?" "I don't have none." "Well, come and see me when you have some." "I'd like to get some. Where do I get it?" "Well, you can't get it here because I need a skilled person now."

So we're saying, let's have a youth unemployment program, the First Start program, that helps the employer offset some of the costs of training people up to the positions that they need. For example, what happens if a company is trying to hire people—for example, Placer Dome is going to be hiring about 100 people in order to develop the new pit that they're working on in the city of Timmins. They're going to need truck drivers, they're going to need crusher operators, they're going to need all kinds of operators of different equipment, something that you can train people up to within six months to a year.

So why wouldn't we do what New Democrats are asking for and do a youth unemployment program that allows people that first start, that first job that they're going to get, or that first real job they get—not just the McDonald's minimum-wage job, but give them an opportunity to get to Placer Dome, where the company says, "Okay, I'll hire you," because we're using tax dollars smartly in order to train young people to get high-paying jobs so we can fulfill the training needs and the job needs of the employer, we can get people to make real money so that they can become citizens in our economy who are able to dream about a better tomorrow, buy a house, buy a four-wheeler, maybe take a holiday every now and then and put that money back into the economy. It's an investment in our future.

We're saying to Kathleen Wynne, we listened to the throne speech very carefully the other day. There were touch points in the throne speech that said there's something here for everyone. But what we really didn't hear is action about how this is going to happen. So we're saying to you, here are a couple of ideas that Andrea Horwath and New Democrats have put forward,

but we expect you now to work with us, if you're true to your word, and figure out how we're going to put this in place. We have some ideas how that could happen, and we're challenging the government to do that. If you don't, don't just count on our support come this budget. We want to be able to make these things happen; we ain't joking. People back home are hurting. People want some help. The Velmas out there, and the Madame Chevaliers and the young people out there who are trying to get jobs are the ones who are looking at this government and looking at this House—because it is a minority Parliament—to do what's right for them back home.

I want to talk about another aspect of this before I go to auto insurance, and that is on the question of the balanced approach to balancing the budget by 2017-18, and also the whole issue in regard to the tax loopholes. The one thing that drives me absolutely crazy is that I listen to Liberals and Conservatives talk about tax cuts as being this magical wand that they can wave over the economy and somehow or other it is just going to be the panacea to fix all the problems in the economy. We have been giving tax cut after tax cut after tax cut to the largest corporations in this province, and we really have not seen the offset in the job creation that we should be getting. What's worse is it's costing us money. We can't afford—and I listen to my Conservative friends especially say that tax cuts are a good thing. That is essentially a cost to the treasury. When you're saying, "I'm going to give a tax cut," it means to say somebody's got to pay it. If there ain't no new money coming in, it means to say you've got take it from within the budget, in other words, take it from another program, or you've got to increase the deficit.

The interesting thing was, recently—about six months ago—there was a report that came out that essentially said if you left the tax levels at what they were prior to the Liberals and Conservatives starting all these tax cuts, guess where we would be today? We'd be in a surplus position in our budget. Isn't that something?

You know, you think you would have learned from George Bush and Mitt Romney. Haven't you guys paid attention to what those guys did down there? George Bush comes to power after a balanced budget from the Clinton administration, and he gets right to work cutting taxes for the people of the United States. And what do we end up with? We end up with the United States—the highest debt per capita that they've ever seen in the history of that country, and now they're into major austerity.

So I say, my friends, that when you come to the issue of tax cuts, don't try to make it look as if that is an issue that raises money. In fact, the offset to the creation of jobs is not as great as what it was. If we were serious about using tax measures to create jobs, you would tie them to results. You would do what Andrea Horwath has said, and you would say, "Okay. All right. We want to assist the private sector in investing in the province of Ontario, and we will give you that tax cut if we have some guarantees that you're actually going to do investment in your company and that you're going to hire people, and we will make sure that you do so."

How many cases did we run through here? Through Hamilton, St. Catharines, northern Ontario—everywhere—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: London.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: London—where people were given tax cuts—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Windsor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Especially in Windsor, my God—and all those other places where they got tax cuts given to them. The government, federally and provincially, went and poured money into them, and then they closed up plant and they moved it off to Mexico or the United States. Isn't that nuts?

We're reusing—

Hon. Brad Duguid: Name them.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: John Deere. There's all kinds of them. Weren't you the minister in charge of that?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What about Caterpillar there, Brad?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How about Caterpillar in London? My God.

So the point is—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Look what happened to GM in Oshawa. More money to Oshawa and they're moving the plant off to the United States.

So the point is, the only way that tax cuts make any sense to Ontario, from a revenue perspective, is to say tie those tax cuts to a result so that, in the end, we're able to get something for the bang for the buck.

So I just say, when we hear this mantra that tax cuts are the way to prosperity, I just say remember what it did to our budget: We ended up in a deficit today largely because of those tax cuts. Yes, because of some of the spending the Liberals did as well, but—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Listen to Carney.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Carney has said the same thing.

Anyway, I should not engage in the heckling that's going on here. It's throwing me off. But I would just say—I should know that; I've been around here long enough. But I'm agreeing with all your heckles; that's the point. I'm with them. Especially you, Mr. Natyshak. Those are some good ones.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's encouragement.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's encouragement, is what it is.

But the point is—I just want to end that part on this—if you're going to do tax cuts, they've got to be targeted. They've got to be tied to results. You don't do them otherwise.

The other thing is, on this point, which really irks me—we're saying now to the private sector, "Oh, we're going to allow you to write off your entertainment costs—HST costs—as a cost of doing business." Who at home gets that kind of break? What am I getting at home if I'm an average citizen of Ontario that's going to give me that kind of thing? God, they can't even afford to go to the restaurant some of them, let alone write off the taxes on the meal that they're paying—on the entertainment.

People back home are looking for some savings, and that's one of the reasons why we raised the auto insurance issue. What's clear is this government has done much in order to reduce the cost to the auto insurers of this province, and they said at the time that would result in lower rates. What we have seen is a lessening of the benefit of accident victims and an increase to the profit of the corporation. They're allowed to make money, I make no argument with that, but there's no offset back to the person who's buying the product.

So we're saying a 15% reduction—the government, what are they saying? "Oh, yeah. Let's do some more for those poor auto insurance companies. They're hurting so bad. Let's help them along. They need another break because they've got to make more money." Okay, making money in auto insurance—I get it. Everybody's allowed to make money. But they're going to give them another break and say, "Andrea, work with us on the fraud component." Well, I agree with you that we shouldn't allow any kind of fraud in any system. But, my God, where have you been? For all of the things you've done for them now, they're already now making record profits. We have the highest rates in Ontario. We should at least give them 15%.

0940

So I say to my friends across the way, here's the test: We heard the throne speech, and we hear what you had to say, but you better be listening to what Ontarians are saying to you, because what we're saying as New Democrats is what they have said to us.

Now what we need to do is a little bit less talk and a little bit more walk, and if you're prepared to engage in that real discussion that allows us to bring concrete results to people back home so that people at home can feel that there's a real change for them, we're prepared to engage in that discussion. But if this is more of the same, my friends, don't count on us to be your dance partner come this spring. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: How do you follow that? That's years of experience.

I want to congratulate Premier Wynne. My first exchange with Ms. Wynne was 15 years ago, when she was head of the Metro Parent Network and I was a school community adviser across the street at the old Toronto board. At that time, we were focused on education, because we were activists and staff. People who cared about public education clearly saw that there was an attack on it, and we were fighting the PCs' create-a-crisis-in-education agenda, and we were doing that—which is ironic; I think there's some irony for me to be standing in front of you today and talking to the throne speech when education clearly is in a state of crisis in the province and trust needs to be rebuilt and there's lot of work to do on that portfolio.

That said, there were a lot of people in those times who were connecting, who were communicating, who were listening. I was listening very carefully to the throne

speech, because when the Legislature was prorogued on October 15, we immediately got to work, the NDP did. We went out and we listened to people. We listened to the communities that we serve, because good ideas come from people when you listen to them and when they see that there's true engagement. As we developed our policy and platforms and our priorities that we put forward ahead of the budget discussion in a very open and transparent way—people see their ideas and themselves reflected in this party, and that's good for democracy. It's good to build trust up in the province of Ontario.

I come from a town with two universities and a college, so I've spent a lot of time talking to youth in Kitchener–Waterloo, and actually the entire region. There is a despondency. People are desperate. They are losing hope. After going through post-secondary education, which has not been made any more affordable under the Liberal government, and graduating with heavy debt loads, they're looking at the job market and they're saying, "Where are the jobs? How am I going to put my education into action to make this province a stronger place?" Around those jobs round tables, really good ideas came forward.

Students need experience. They want experience in the not-for-profit sector. They want to experience the applied trades, skilled trades. They're looking to make a difference in the province of Ontario, and the doors are being shut. We put forward a very good idea. The First Start jobs plan is strong. It has been proven to work. Obama has applied it to the States and with some success. If you have a good idea that works, you should apply it. Incentivizing the private sector to create job opportunities for youth in the province of Ontario is something that can work and it should work. It should be applied, and we should have heard it, actually, in the throne speech, because it works.

We're supposed to be working together, so I hope that, as we move forward, the youth jobs employment strategy that we've put forward, that clearly has been ignored from this side of the House, will be put into action, because I think that the people of this province appreciate the fact that there is some collaboration, there is some collaborative talk. There is a lot of talk about conversation, but I think that those conversations need to be active listening in that they lead to action, and we need action on jobs for youth in the province of Ontario.

I do want to say, though, that there was a moment of hope, actually, in the throne speech which talked about moving the issue of those with disabilities into an actionable item where we can actually put people who have disabilities to work. I think that that was a long time overdue, and I think this is a shared goal that we have in our party as well. As a demonstration of the commitment, the government will shift the Accessibility Directorate from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to the Ministry of Economic Development. When you talk to people in the communities, we are not reaching our potential from an economic development perspective, because those who are very qualified and very dedicated

to change just cannot break into the jobs market. I'm looking forward to having those conversations, but in a very real and tangible way.

Today the front page of the paper has to do with full-day kindergarten and how that program rolled out. I think that this is a good learning opportunity. Since we're in a minority setting, we should be trying to learn from each other. When the full-day kindergarten rolled out, clearly, the whole child care sector was left sort of hanging. I mean, it's a fragmented, broken system. We can do way better in the province of Ontario. The full-day kindergarten actually destabilized child care, and it was only when we came to the table through the last budget session last spring that we were able to provide some transition funding to stabilize that.

But there are good ideas out there. There are innovative, creative ideas that are happening in the province of Ontario. For instance, the Waterloo Region District School Board, where I was once chair—when the full-day kindergarten happened and when the Liberals backed off the idea of the Pascal vision for early learning and care, before and after, we decided to go ahead with that program. They backed off, because it takes some courage to be innovative and it takes some courage to be creative. To date, actually, that school board has created 1,600 child care spaces at no cost to the taxpayer through the current infrastructure that exists in our schools, and the more people that go into that program, the less cost it is for parents. That's a good idea. It was a good idea. You know, good ideas are good ideas, but you have to implement them with some integrity and with some dignity, I think.

I think the potential for us moving forward, if there's true listening on auto insurance—the other day I was in a coffee shop and I met a fellow. He's paying the same amount for auto insurance that his car is worth. Seniors cannot take it anymore; actually, nobody can take it anymore. The cost for auto insurance continues to rise. There is a breaking point. People cannot afford for those costs to keep going up when they are the safest drivers in Canada. Ontario is one of the safest provinces for drivers.

So we can do more, and these are affordability issues that the NDP is absolutely committed to. If there's room, and there should be room, we should be able to actually lower the cost for every driver in the province of Ontario in a tangible way going forward with this budget.

Auto insurance, home care—you know, I was recently knocking on doors, as many of you know, in the by-election. You remember that by-election, right? It was a good by-election. I know a lot of you were there. It's fun, but you know, when you knock on doors, you actually have conversations with people about their lived experience. The seniors in Kitchener–Waterloo need access to affordable home care. They need it in a timely way. Seniors have worked their entire lives to strengthen our communities and here they are, at the end of their days, getting to a certain point where maintaining integrity in their lives is becoming a real challenge. You can judge a society on the way we treat our children and the way we

treat our seniors—and then you have to build in those supports in the middle, and we can do better for seniors.

I think our five-day home care guarantee is something that will work and it should work for the people of this province, and it should be an integral part of the health care conversation, as our leader and Mr. Bisson actually pointed out. This is early intervention. It's prevention. It's smart and strategic investment of tax dollars. It isn't wasteful. It's ensuring that seniors can stay in their homes and not end up in a hospital and not end up in a long-term-care facility, if they could even get into those facilities.

The work before us is profound. We're in a tough spot. I think a balanced approach to addressing the \$12-billion deficit has to be applied in a very real way. I'm looking forward to the committees to start. In the last session, there were no committees. There was no true exchange between the parties in a real, tangible way. I'm looking forward to going to finance. When you follow the money, you follow the real priorities of a government. So, I'm looking forward to following the money and to see really where the focus is, because people do not appreciate the fact that corporate tax loopholes are a prevalent part of the culture of this place, and based on the jobs and round tables that I've been part of, they think that if a small business creates a job, they should get a tax incentive. They should be rewarded for being part of the solution. Getting tax breaks for drinking and entertaining, that is not a priority for us in this place, and we need to address that in a real, tangible way.

0950

So there's promise here; we've been very clear. The last budget consultation process was problematic on a number of levels, and yet we've put out some very clear strategies and priorities; they're the priorities of the people that we've consulted with. We've brought those priorities to the government. I think if there's a true sense of working together, if we do want to rebuild confidence in our economy, in our health care and in our education system, then the opportunity is there. But it has to not just be lip service; it has to be, as I said, active listening that leads to action. I look forward to being part of that conversation.

We have the ability to make positive change, and I look forward to working with the economic development minister and the infrastructure minister, because those are two issues that are new to me. Over the last six months I've learned a lot about culverts and waste water management and nuclear plants and gas plants. In fact, I toured a gas plant, and apparently you can actually build a gas plant in a community, you just have to be truly consultative, and part of the process has to have some integrity to it. But the energy portfolio, I think, is also a challenge that will connect all of our priorities around building strong communities, around growing the economy, around creating jobs. That's going to be part of the interesting process as we move forward.

The corporate tax loopholes, though—this is something that the people of the province have no patience for.

The more they learn about how we treat corporations versus how we treat your average Ontarian who's just trying to get by, there's no patience for it and there's no tolerance for it. There really shouldn't be any tolerance for it.

I'm just thinking back to my last job creator session—a consultation process. The private sector does want to be part of the solution, they do, but they need some help. Providing a wage subsidy to bring youth into the workplace is actually something that has proven to be very successful. They want to be part of the solution and they want to be part of the training process.

At this one session, the president of Conestoga College mentioned that there's a real opportunity here to build in the skilled trades, the applied skills that we need for infrastructure and for the economy, and not to stream everyone through an education system that doesn't lead to a job. I think that if we are smarter about our investment in post-secondary education, if we're cognizant of the connection between that educational experience and the true economy—the new economy, if you will, which is built on knowledge but also needs the applied skills—then we can make real progress. That's what progressive sectors have been able to do. They've measured the gap in services, because right now we have graduates without jobs and we have a gap in the jobs economy. There's room for improvement on those things, and as I said, I'm looking forward to following the money, because if you follow the money, you follow the priorities.

Interjection: What about auto insurance rates?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The auto insurance rates, yes; there's no doubt that people recognize that that's a real, tangible thing that they see every single day: the cost of their auto insurance going up—actually their home insurance as well. But if you're a safe driver, if you've never had an accident, you continually get penalized, and you watch the profit margin of those auto insurance companies continue to rise and then you can genuinely recognize that it's a true unfair equation. That's why we've put that forward. This is something that can be done and it should be done. I know that there's an excuse over on this side of the margin, which speaks specifically to fraud. We need to address that. But it's a small proportion to the continued increase of auto insurance rates.

The affordability issue is an idea that translates across the entire province. If you're in the north, if you're in the rural communities, if you're living in an urban centre—they see the cost of living continue to rise and they want us, in this House, to work together to find some solutions, but they want to see that balanced approach as well. You know, you can see, when you lose that sense of balance—and that actually happened during Bill 115. I mean, there was no balance to that conversation. It was—well, there was no conversation, there really wasn't.

Interjection: There was a crisis.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There was a crisis—well, it was a manufactured crisis, which is unfortunate, because when politicians and political parties put their own needs ahead of the needs of the people we're elected to serve,

nobody wins. I mean, clearly, we saw that first-hand. The work before us is huge on that portfolio, because education drives the economy.

And, you know, there's a very good example. In the throne speech, there was some mention around First Nations education and closing the gap for First Nations. You know, First Nations, Métis, Inuit—this is a growing demographic in the province of Ontario. There's a complete lack of leadership at the national level. We can be part of the solution, and there's a cost to us to say, "Oh, that's their issue." I think we've been very clear in this party that the approach going forward needs to be balanced, it needs to be strategic, and it needs to be based on some basic principles of social justice—yes, I said "social justice." It's true: social justice works.

So in conclusion, I think that this has been an interesting experience on the whole to listen to the language of the throne speech and to find some common consensus. Language is language, and language can be very powerful, but the real power in this House will come when we actually do something, when we work together, and if not—I mean, there are some very clear choices. Our leader has been very clear. We need to get results for Ontarians. We need to get results for the people who sent us here. And we do need to look at all of those opportunities in a very holistic way: from youth employment, from retraining for a workforce that has actually been squeezed out of the manufacturing sector; the continued need to modernize the manufacturing sector; and to be creative and innovative.

There are huge missed opportunities from an agricultural perspective. The new economy is food, and we should be creating jobs that are local, that contribute to the overall health of our communities. The potential has not been tapped into at all, because we've been so focused on lowering those corporate tax rates, which actually don't create jobs. If they did, then we would be in a very different place right now. That dead money that Mr. Carney has referenced—we need to find a way, and I hope a very strategic way, to stimulate the economy, to grow the economy so that there is some justice in this province, so that every community has the potential to reach their potential.

So in conclusion, let's get to work. That's why we're here. We're here to work for the people of the province of Ontario. They expect more from us, and they should expect more from us, and we're going to be very clear and honest in that conversation going forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has indicated no further business. This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 0959 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Scott Thurlow and Andrea Kent from the Canadian Renewable Fuels Association, sitting in the members' gallery. Welcome to question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West. Sorry—Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. It's always good to get two mentions in there.

I would like to introduce an intern working in my office, Domna Theodorou. She's a U of T criminology student and is doing a fabulous job. Welcome to the Queen's Park question period.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to announce that St. Clement school is here today, visiting the Legislature—the grade 5 class. I know they're going to enjoy a very calm, cool and collected Legislature, right, sir? Welcome to St. Clement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to introduce Alan Krolik, who's here. He's from the city of Toronto but he's a Facebook friend and he really enjoys being at Queen's Park. I want to say thanks for coming here today.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to introduce the family of page Luisa, who is here from Beaches—East York: her mother, Dori Antolin; her father, Bruce Grant; her grandmother Anne Grant; and her grandfather Michael Antolin. They're all up there in the public gallery. I hope you're having a good time today.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to welcome Murray and Marilyn Heintz from Burlington, who are here today, as well as Gloria Reszler, who is here from York—Simcoe region.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome Ajax—Pickering's page, Jessica Kostuch, and her family to Queen's Park. Her mom and dad, Christine and Jim, and her siblings—brother Matthew, a former page of ours, and sister Kristen—are joining us in the Legislature today, and we welcome all of them.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Please join me in welcoming Nick Pessos, who is in the east members' gallery today. He's a good friend of mine who grew up in the beautiful riding of Don Valley East. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today, it's my turn to introduce—in the Speaker's gallery, from the great riding of Brant, we have at Queen's Park—from Stoney Creek, we have Bill Stathakos, Josh Stathakos and Rose Stathakos; and from Brant, Lacey MacDonald-Moore and Heather MacDonald-Moore. Welcome to Queen's Park.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask all members to join me in welcoming the group of pages. If they could assemble, please, we'll do our introductions. They've got it all down pat. This group loves to smile.

These are the legislative pages serving in the second session of the 40th Parliament: Luisa Antolin Grant, from Beaches–East York; Rhea Basu, from Oak Ridges–Markham; Jaden Dilda, from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale; Daniel Forestell, from Eglinton–Lawrence; Lauren George, from Niagara Falls; Alexander Giordano, from Etobicoke Centre; Vanessa Gomez, from Burlington; John Hiemstra, from Ottawa–Orléans; Jenna Hirji, from Richmond Hill; A.J. Jonker from Dufferin–Caledon; Jessica Kostuch from Ajax–Pickering; Joshua Limpert from St. Paul's; Daniella Mikanovsky from Thornhill; Justin O'Brien from Pickering–Scarborough East; Olivia Oraziotti from Sault Ste. Marie—I said that deliberately—Joe Sammon from Simcoe–Grey; Jessica Seifried from Mississauga South; William Strathdee from Perth–Wellington; Stacey Thomas from Scarborough Southwest; Stephanie Tom from Willowdale; Charlie Violin from Halton; Josh Vito from Kitchener–Waterloo; Angela Wang from Scarborough–Agincourt; Jasmine Wilson from Mississauga–Erindale. These are our pages.

MEMBER FOR YORK CENTRE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While we're in an uplifted mood, I would like to ask the House to join me in congratulating the member from York Centre. Monte Kwinter, who has almost 28 years of service in this House, recently achieved a significant milestone in the history of the Legislative Assembly. On January 25, at the age of 81 years and 310 days, Mr. Kwinter became the most elderly person ever to serve in the sitting of the Ontario Legislature.

I think that, in respect of this milestone, I would give the member an opportunity to make comment.

Interjection: Speech. Speech,

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would give the member an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Thank you very much. Really, I'm pleased to have this recognition, because for the last three or four weeks everybody thought that it was my birthday. It had nothing to do with my birthday; it has to do with the fact that on October 6, I became the oldest member ever to be elected to the Legislature and the fourth-oldest to serve. On December 20, 2011, I became the third-oldest to serve; on April 16, 2012, I became the second-oldest to serve; and on January 25, I became the oldest member in the history of the Parliament.

Now, the interesting thing about that is that every single day I set a new milestone, because the people that I've surpassed are frozen in time. They're not going anywhere, because they've been dead for about 25 years, so every day that I survive, I set a new milestone.

I want to say that I'm in my 28th year, after eight elections, and I still enjoy every minute of it. Just so you know, I expect to run in the next election. I thank you for your good wishes.

Applause.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pretty hard to top that.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I'd like to just read a quote that appeared in one of the local newspapers, that I got a kick out of. It says, "Monte Kwinter was uplifting"—this was a profile that was done of me. It said, "At age 81 years of age, Mr. Kwinter has more energy and desire to serve than people half his age.

"The ... community and his political colleagues owe Monte Kwinter a debt of gratitude. They do not make them like him anymore."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, all I have to say is this is the kind of heckling I can tolerate.

Not to try to top Mr. Kwinter, and I suspect that we will not be charged with ageism, because I suspect that both parties will submit candidates to run against you—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We've got a couple of septuagenarians here.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One might think that I've lost control, but I can get it back.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On a serious note, before we begin question period today, I want to make reference to two matters that I touched on yesterday.

First, a reminder that questions asked and answers given must relate to government policy. While I am quite aware that there are political manoeuvrings inherent in the business that we conduct here, we should strive, as much as possible, to preserve the proceedings here that are intended to be. Question period is an opportunity to question and defend government policy.

Secondly, yesterday there were questions that came perilously close to anticipating an outcome of a live matter of privilege before the House. The point raised by the member from Prince Edward–Hastings is being considered by the Speaker and a ruling will be delivered in the fullness of time. In the meantime, the matter is not appropriate subject for questions or debate. So I've made that quite clear for all of us to try to stay as close to as possible.

POWER PLANTS

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House that yesterday evening, I was informed by the Deputy Minister of Energy that he was informed last evening that the Ontario Power Authority has un-

covered additional pages related to the legislative committee's request—

Interjections.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —and this morning I had the occasion to—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's a cover-up.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I will withdraw that statement.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you, Speaker. And this morning I had the occasion to speak with the chair of the board of the OPA—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —and encouraged timely and complete transparency.

The documents in question are being compiled as I speak and will be tabled with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly as soon as possible this afternoon.

Also, I have asked the board chair to explain how these additional records were uncovered and indeed address how they were overlooked. The chair and CEO will be making themselves available to answer questions in the media studio this afternoon. Their top priority at this time is to complete the documents and submit them to the Legislature. The people of Ontario have the right to expect that the express will of this Legislature will be carried out with utmost diligence.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to working with the opposition and with you to make this minority Parliament work. Members on all sides have a responsibility to make Parliament productive to build a stronger, healthier and fairer society for Ontarians. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not asking for quiet for you to continue.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me first, on behalf of the PC caucus, extend congratulations to the member for York Centre for his longevity. It's an extraordinary record. The fact that he could pull an off-the-cuff speech like that is a testament to the skills he has shown, obviously, in his time in politics.

Speaker, before I get to my question, I also want to express my extreme disappointment to Premier Wynne and her cabinet that, after only three days in this House—

this kind of trick, this kind of tactic shows how much the new government looks like the Dalton McGuinty government.

Let me ask the Premier a very direct question. Premier, the Liberal government brought in a wage freeze on teachers last October called Bill 115. In hindsight, do you think the legislated wage freeze was a mistake?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very clear that we understood and we understand that constraint around compensation and wages was important. That's why the legislation was brought in. We worked to negotiate, to come to negotiated settlements. That didn't work. The legislation was brought in, as we said we would do in our budget last year.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that I believe, and I believe that our party believes, that a negotiated settlement, a collective bargaining process is the best way to come to a contract. That is our preferred methodology, and as we've demonstrated in the broader public sector, that strategy is working. We will continue to work with our partners to come to collectively bargained contracts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm not sure we got a straight answer there, Premier. I think you said that you do support Bill 115, that you do not believe that was a mistake. Bill 115 was a legislated wage increase because, as you mentioned, your preferred method of negotiation was not effective.

You indicated yesterday that you are now backing away from the option of a legislated wage freeze. You did not mention the words "wage freeze" at all in your throne speech on Tuesday. So I want to ask you, Premier, if you encounter a situation like Bill 115 again, where you can't negotiate a zero-and-zero increase, will you bring in a legislated wage freeze to ensure that we don't blow a bigger hole in the current budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we can deal in hypotheticals. The reality is that we are working with our broader public sector. We are bringing in collective agreements that are zero increases. We are working with the people who deliver services in the province, and that is—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That is the major difference between us and them. We really believe that it's possible to have working relationships. We really believe that it is possible to respect the collective bargaining process.

We brought in Bill 115 after months of working to come to a collectively bargained agreement, which we did with 55,000 employees. The process was not what we would have liked it to be, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've been in conversation over the last few weeks with our education partners.

But the reality is that we're getting those zero increases. We are putting in place the constraints. That's happening, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier says that you're achieving that; actually, you're not. During prorogation, CUPE had an 8% increase in Halton Healthcare; Nipissing University faculty had a 6% increase during prorogation when you suspended the Legislature; and in January, Windsor police received an 11.5% per cent wage increase.

One of the reasons I'm convinced that you can get wage increases is because you have to hold, in your hand, a legislative wage freeze if you cannot achieve so through negotiations. That was the approach, I would argue, that helped actually to get a wage freeze with teachers at the end of the day.

But what I'm hearing you saying is you're taking that off the table. You are no longer contemplating any option of a legislated wage increase. I want to make sure I'm clear: You abandoned a wage freeze in your throne speech. You basically demoted the Minister of Education, who had the wage freeze in the last—for the teachers' round. So I think actions speak louder than words.

Are you, Premier, taking off the table the legislated wage freeze? Yes or no?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I actually think it's very important for the government of Ontario to have good working relationships with other levels of government, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolutely critical and vital part of the work that we do as a government.

It is critical to us that we have the kind of wage constraints that we are, in fact, achieving with our broader public service employees. The average increase has been 0.2% over the last 12 months. We are achieving success on that front. I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition would have applauded that, that he would have said that is a good thing, because he recognizes that we need to be fiscally responsible and that we need that kind of constraint as well.

We will continue to work with the people who deliver services in this province, Mr. Speaker. That is our philosophy, and it is working.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: The current budget plan—that brought forward by previous Finance Minister Duncan—had a wage freeze in it. He estimated that would bring in savings of \$6 billion a year. It's the same figure that we brought forward: \$2 billion a year, \$6 billion over three years. Minister Duncan, at the time, was clear that he couldn't negotiate a wage freeze, that your government would bring in wage-freeze legislation. We supported that when it came to Bill 115. We thought it wasn't the best approach, but it was the right thing to do at the time.

Since then, the minister responsible was demoted from cabinet, you tossed that legislation overboard, and the public sector union leadership left all smiles from the throne speech.

I don't want to leave you twisting in the wind here. I really think that taxpayers—the 85% who aren't on the government payroll—deserve a straight answer, yes or no: Are you ruling out altogether a legislated pay freeze to make sure that we don't blow a \$6-billion hole in the budget plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are actually on track. We're ahead of schedule to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18, Mr. Speaker. So what we are doing is working; it is absolutely working. We are committed to that 2017-18 date, and as I say, we are ahead of schedule on that.

So we're going to continue to work with the people who deliver services in this province, whether it's in the health care sector, whether it's in the education sector, whether it's other government services. We're going to work with those people because they interact with the people of the province, and they make sure that their children have strong and enriched classrooms. They make sure that our hospitals and our health care facilities, our long-term-care homes, are in the best shape possible. So I think it only makes sense that a government would work with the people who deliver those services and that there would be a respectful relationship with them. I know, Mr. Speaker, that that distinguishes us from the path that the Leader of the Opposition would have us take.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, the Premier speaks of a respectful relationship. But what about a respectful relationship for the 85% of people who are not on the government payroll, who have had six-, seven-year pay freezes, who have lost jobs, the 600,000 people who woke up this morning with no job to go to and no job to go to tomorrow?

We've got a vision of a stronger Ontario, Speaker, one that is prosperous, that is leading Canada in job creation again. In order to get there, we have to have our books back in balance. We have to make sure we send a signal to investors that our fiscal house is in order.

So I'll ask the Premier one last time, because it's almost as difficult to get an answer from her as it was from Premier McGuinty: If you're not going to bring in a legislated wage freeze, what initiatives are you going to bring in to balance the budget? If you're not going to bring in the power of a wage-freeze legislation, how do you plan to actually balance the budget, because you had no ideas in the throne speech to reduce spending?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, we are on schedule; we're ahead of schedule on the balancing of the budget—2017-18. We are overachieving on those markers, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to find those efficiencies, we will continue to constrain those increases in wages, and we will continue to work towards that balanced budget of 2017-18.

Let me just say, Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty sure that the 85% of people that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about are people who have children in our schools. I'm pretty sure they are people who have loved ones in our hospitals. I'm pretty sure that they are people

who need services delivered by government. Those people deserve our respect as well—the Leader of the Opposition is absolutely right—but the respect they deserve is that we work to create jobs, that we work with the private sector, that we make sure small businesses have access to capital, that we make sure we have the infrastructure in place so that business will come to the province so those jobs will be created. That’s the respect that is due to the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Disturbingly, Speaker, I think the Premier misses the entire point. It is these things that are most at risk. It is our kids’ classroom education. It is our health care system. It is putting new cancer-busting drugs in the formulary. All those things are at risk if you don’t get the books back in balance, if you don’t get out of the debt trap in the first place. That’s what’s at risk, let alone creating jobs in our province.

The Premier’s been disturbingly evasive on a simple yes or no question: if she’s going to bring a legislative wage freeze or not. It sounds like she’s abandoning that. So I want to see her mindset on where she is going to go then on wage negotiations.

When you were Minister of Education, you brought in a 10% increase for teachers at a time that the province of Ontario was facing a \$20-billion deficit, at a time that wages were frozen, that people in the private sector were out of work. You thought it fair and reasonable to bring in a 10% increase for teachers. In hindsight, Premier, do you think a 10% increase for teachers in that fiscal reality was the right move or was it a mistake?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In hindsight, the accomplishments that our students achieved when I was Minister of Education and when this government has been in power, Mr. Speaker, are second to none in the English-speaking world—absolutely none.

In hindsight, the fact that when we came into office after the party opposite had been in office and 68% of kids were graduating from high school—and now 82% of students are graduating from high school. That’s tens of thousands of students who have the ability now to go on to post-secondary, who have the ability to become an apprentice. They have a brighter future because of the work that the people on this side of the House have done. So, in hindsight, I will just say that I am so proud of the legacy of this government on education.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I, on behalf of New Democrats, also want to congratulate the member from York Centre on his fantastic length of service here in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It’s something I don’t know that we can all strive for but certainly something that we’re all proud of you for having achieved. There’s no doubt about that.

Speaker, my first question is to the Premier, and it’s a pretty simple question: When did the Premier know that

the OPA had other documents that were not released to the people of this Legislature in terms of the gas plant scandals that have been unfolding for the last year or so?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you for the question. I learned last night that there were documents. So, well into the night, the Minister of Energy and I were speaking.

This is an ongoing process. It’s very complicated. I know that the chair of the OPA will be speaking to the media today about that ongoing process. This is why, Mr. Speaker, from the first day of my campaign for leadership I have said that I want all the information that is available, that is asked for by the committee—I want all that information to be available. I want there to be an all-party committee. I have said I will appear before the committee. It’s why I asked the Auditor General to look at both gas plants. I want the information to be available.

The fact that there is more information—it’s disappointing that we didn’t know about it, but we want all that information to be out in the public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this has been an ongoing process of obfuscation of the facts by this government. That’s what the ongoing process has been.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I will withdraw, Speaker.

The bottom line is this: The energy minister announced just a moment ago that, for a second time, a government agency has uncovered yet more documents on the cancelled gas plants, documents that this government has insisted repeatedly did not exist. They didn’t exist the first time; apparently they didn’t exist this time either.

Does the Premier have any explanation whatsoever for the people of this province or any justification on how this kind of thing can happen in a democratic society like Ontario?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, look, it is not obviously—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members from Durham, Leeds–Grenville and Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would obviously prefer, Mr. Speaker, to have been able to say that every single document, every single piece of electronic material that was created, has been found. It is an ongoing process, and I wish that a different decision had been made at the very beginning of this process and we were not having this conversation. But the fact is, a decision was made. All of the parties agreed that there should be a different decision, and now there are documents that are part of a complicated search process. The Legislature asked for those documents.

What would really be a problem, Mr. Speaker, is if those documents did not come forward. The fact is, they are coming forward. It’s unfortunate that we didn’t know

that there were more, but they are coming forward, and that's as it should be.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have to say that we all know what complicates a search process, and that's when somebody decides that they don't want documents to be found. That's the problem here in Ontario.

The government insisted that all documents had been disclosed. Then more were discovered. Then they made the same claim again, that now all documents had been exposed, and now more, again, have been discovered.

Is there any reason, at this point in time, that anybody in this province should believe the government has any credibility whatsoever on the issue of the moved gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville? Why should anybody buy their story now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So, my story is that we're going to work to find every single—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. The member from Durham, come to order. The member from Halton, come to order. If you'll notice, I've started naming the ridings. The next move is a warning.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said from the first day of my leadership campaign that one of my priorities was to make sure that every single piece of information that was available—and remember, we're not talking about boxes of paper, we are talking—

Interjection: Yes, you are.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, we are not talking about boxes of paper, we are talking about electronic information that has to be searched out. And so, as you search—and this is my understanding of what the OPA has been doing in an ongoing way, looking for those pieces of information—that is an ongoing process. That is exactly what has been happening and what will continue to happen, because the Legislature has asked for that information. We will work and make sure that every piece of information that is asked for is available, and that is as it should be.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier of our province sat at the cabinet table while all of this unfolded over the last several months. The Premier of our province was the co-chair of the Liberal campaign when these decisions were being made. The Premier of our province might have a nice talk to talk to us about, in terms of her campaign promises when she ran for the leadership of her party, but the bottom line is, the people of this province deserve the answers to why these documents have been without the view of the members of this Legislature, as was their right, for months and months and months. I want to know from this Premier why anybody in Ontario

should have any trust whatsoever in any Liberal in this province.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are going to do everything in our power to make sure that every piece of information that we can get our hands on is available to the committee. That's why I want to have an all-party committee—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that's why I've agreed to come and appear before the committee. That's why I asked the Auditor General to look at both gas plant decisions.

We are very aware that this is an ongoing process—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and that there will continue to be a search for the documentation that the committee is going to be looking for, and that's as it should be, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I want to quote from a letter that was sent by the Ontario Power Authority on October 12, 2012: "On behalf of the Ontario Power Authority, I would like to apologize to the members of both the estimates committee and the provincial Legislature. It was always our intention to provide all responsive records and to respect the ruling of the Speaker..."

"The documents today are the result of a comprehensive and thorough search."

This was on October 12, 2012.

My question to the Premier is, how many documents are going to be dumped this afternoon?

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You are warned. To be clear: the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to share with the House—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark is warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm pleased to share with the House exactly what happened last evening. I was informed at about 6:30 p.m. by the Deputy Minister of Energy that he had just been informed by the CEO of OPA that they had additional documents, which they were going to disclose today.

Very early this morning, I spoke to the chair of OPA and wanted to find out exactly what was happening. I expressed to the chair that there needs to be total transparency, total honesty, total disclosure and, more so, that

they be prepared to come here to Queen's Park in the media studio and be totally, fully transparent with the public on the issue of disclosure of documents.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday members of this government got up and acted all indignant because the opposition was doing their job, trying to hold them to account on the most vile scandal that has faced this province in a long time. They were indignant, and they accused us—they accused the opposition—of being mean-spirited. Well, I accuse them of being disingenuous, Speaker. This is absolutely—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll withdraw.

Speaker, the bottom line is this: Who knows how many more months will go by before yet more documents are discovered? I think that the only thing that will solve this problem here in Ontario is a public inquiry. Will the Premier agree to it?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In my conversation with the chair of OPA this morning, they confirmed to me that both the chair and the CEO would be pleased to attend the committee that was established yesterday and make themselves available to answer any questions. They're also willing to accept a third-party facilitator to work with the House leaders of this Legislature and the OPA, to have full, 100% assurance that all documents have been released, to the best of their knowledge.

POWER PLANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. We've just witnessed a shocking revelation from the Minister of Energy today that there are still thousands of documents yet to be produced relating to this gas plant fiasco. They've suddenly just appeared out of thin air, as if by magic.

No one is buying this, Premier. You and many other cabinet ministers have repeatedly stood in this House and assured us that we've had all of the documents relating to this scandal—not once, not twice, but now three times. This is outrageous.

Premier, will you honour your promise and immediately establish a select committee to get to the bottom of this absolutely scandalous mess?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The new Premier acknowledged from day one the concern that this Legislature had about the gas plant issue.

When I was reappointed as House leader, I met with my counterparts and we discussed two ways to move forward. One, a select committee that would have a broad mandate and come back with a comprehensive—

Interjection.

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

Hon. John Milloy: —and, I suspect, more useful report to this Legislature.

The second, Mr. Speaker, was to continue with a mean-spirited, vengeful attack upon a former member of this Legislature, someone who served with distinction—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is warned.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as House leader—we put the choice before the opposition parties, and yesterday morning we saw the results of that choice, with a committee that has been struck, the justice committee. Of course, we will abide by the ruling of this Legislature and co-operate fully with that committee and its investigation.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The time for playing games in this matter is long past. I have in my hand a copy of a letter that the Premier wrote to the Leader of the Opposition and to the leader of the third party on February 14, promising to establish a select committee into this matter, with no strings attached. Later, we heard there are strings: We are required to exchange a member's rights of privilege in order to have the select committee. That is not acceptable to us, nor is it acceptable to the people of Ontario. Premier, you have a duty to this House. You have a duty to Ontarians. Will you do the right thing, honour your promise and establish the select committee now?

Hon. John Milloy: At no time was it ever proposed that the rights or privileges of a member would be removed. The simple fact is, there was a vote yesterday, and the proposal that was made to the opposition is that we had two choices to go—

Interjection.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw.

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

The member from Leeds-Grenville, I'm not sure if I have you on my list yet, but you're there. You have a warning.

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the question was, would they support the motion that was anticipated to come forward yesterday and did, or would they move forward with our proposal? The opposition made their choice, but again, I always think it's important to put this whole issue in context and remind people that every single party in this House opposed those gas plants. In fact, the Progressive Conservative Party made it a centrepiece of their 2011 election platform—

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

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier, and I have to say, I stand with complete shock at the remarks of the government House leader. The bottom line is that the decisions were made by this government in order to save Liberal seats in the last election. They spent billions of dollars—likely, possibly; we don't know yet, because we don't have the documents—on making sure that those Liberal seats were saved. New Democrats have been very clear that we don't follow the Liberal way when it comes to private power deals. That's our policy; that's where we stand. We've always stood there. They can't have it both ways, on one hand make these deals and then decide that they're going to benefit from them when they have to break the deal to gain seats in this Legislature. That is the history of this mess.

My question to the Premier is this: When are we going to see all of the documents, and when is the Premier going to admit to her role in this schlimazel?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think it's important—there may be another walk down memory lane for the leader of the New Democratic Party. “New Democrats actually have thought for a long time that that plant should never have been built and we've said so,” said the leader of the third party, in Hansard, October 18, 2010.

The member for Toronto–Danforth told Inside Halton on October 7, 2010, “I don't agree with the Oakville power plant. I don't think it is necessary.”

The member for Beaches–East York told this Legislature on December 2, 2010, “I'm glad that the people of Oakville came to their senses. I'm glad the people of Oakville hired Erin Brockovich and did all the things that they did in order to have this killed.”

Mr. Speaker, the opposition cannot have it both ways. They cannot go out and campaign against them and then stand here today in shock and horror that they were cancelled. Every party in this Legislature supported the cancellation of those plants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What a disgraceful display of deflection by the government House leader. Shame on him and shame on this government. The Premier has all but admitted that she has no idea if there are more documents that are yet to be uncovered. It seems to me that there is only one thing that we can do that's in the best interests of the people of this province and that is to have a public inquiry.

I stand in my spot, Speaker, and I ask for unanimous consent for a public inquiry into the moving of the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A little unorthodox, but is there consent?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard a no.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I repeat again: The new Premier—and certainly in her marching orders to

me, as the reappointed House leader—put forward the fact that we wanted to fully acknowledge the concern that existed over the gas plant issue. We discussed the idea of a mechanism, such as an all-party committee, that could look at all aspects of this. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we thought that was a preferable way than a mean-spirited, vindictive motion against a former member of this Legislature, who served with distinction as the Minister of Energy and in a number of other portfolios.

We left that ultimate choice up to the opposition. Yesterday morning, we saw their choice. Again, although we disagreed with it, I want to state that we will cooperate fully with the committee as it undertakes its work.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, I meet regularly with constituents in GPR and they often tell me how they value our social assistance system right here in Ontario. Those that are in receipt of supports from either Ontario Works and/or the Ontario Disability Support Program tell me that the programs have helped them in their time of need. Others, who have been fortunate to avoid needing these programs, tell me that they are proud to know that Ontario has a strong social safety net.

Minister, in 2010, your ministry announced a review of the social assistance programs. This was an important announcement, and, Speaker, I believe a review of the system hasn't been conducted in over 20 years.

Minister, I know that the commission to review social assistance in Ontario released their final report at the end of last year. I'm wondering if you could tell us today why the review was undertaken in the first place and what are some of the findings that the commissioners made.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased with the member's interest and will do the best I can to answer his very good question. I'm very happy to tell him and this whole House that upgrading and improving our social assistance system, using recommendations from Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh, is a priority of our Premier and for this government. In fact, the Premier has directed the secretary of cabinet to work with my ministry to in fact develop an implementation plan, and I look forward to working on that.

The report makes it clear that there are no simple answers. It's a very complex system, but particularly when you're going through a report that calls for a radical transformation. It makes it clear that to get it right, we have to do it right, so we're taking the time to make sure we do it right.

We're encouraged to see that so many of the 108 recommendations in the report have been supported by, I believe, both opposition parties. We look forward, of course, to working in this—

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

Mr. Grant Crack: Minister, it's great to hear that the report from the commission contains some far-reaching recommendations to improve social assistance right here in Ontario. But at the same time, it has been a couple of months since the commission delivered their report, and I certainly understand that it can take some time to digest these recommendations because of the fundamental change that's going to be required.

The social assistance system is too important for too many Ontarians for us to miss this opportunity for change. So I would like to ask the minister: Will this government be implementing any of the recommendations in the report?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Absolutely. We'll be looking at the report very seriously. It is, as I mentioned, a very transformational document. I know, by working collaboratively with all members of the House, we will move forward to make the kinds of improvements that the report called for.

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There are some 108 recommendations from the commissioners, and they highlight that it's more than just about tweaking a system. It's really about some pretty radical transformational change. The recommendations about creating a new and better system that is mindful of the cost of inequity and poverty are important. It's something that many of us have dedicated our lives to, and it's something that we can't close our eyes to and need to be moving forward with. I look forward to working with everyone in this House to make sure that happens.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. In light of your energy minister's revelation today that there are more documents to come regarding the cover-up or—sorry—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

In light of the Liberal Party's decision and your government's decision in the last election to relocate the power plants—that was the first scandal. The second scandal is that for months and months and months in this place and outside of this place, you refused an order of this House. You played funny with the law—in fact, you broke the law of the Legislative Assembly Act—and you did not produce the documents. Now we find there are more documents to come.

In light of all of that, will you keep your promise of your Valentine's Day letter to Andrea Horwath and Tim Hudak when you said that you would set up a select committee, no strings attached? We need to get to the bottom of this, and clearly, you rascals can't be counted on to get to the bottom of it—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm running out of vocabulary here, Mr. Speaker. Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. While in some circumstances I try to find the humour in everything, in this particular case, because of the situation, I am not going to ask anyone to do anything that they shouldn't be doing in this House. It is a simple withdrawal with no comment. Withdraw, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I was quite frankly appalled by that question, particularly the beginning part, the fact that the House leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, someone with years of experience, would stand here in his place, knowing that there has been a prima facie ruling by you—which means on the surface nothing has been determined. This matter is before a committee of the Legislature. That he would stand here in his place and pre-judge the outcome of a committee, I find shocking.

The other thing: I think it's always important to put it in context, as I did with the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party; and once again remind everyone of the support of the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. Here's what they had to say about the gas plants. The member for Halton told this Legislature on June 1, 2010, "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: Premier, I honestly think you don't want your first week as the 25th Premier of the province of Ontario to be like the last 10 years of the Dalton McGuinty government, where Premier McGuinty would say one thing and always do something else and break his promises. You have made a promise. You have put it in writing. The need for a select committee couldn't be clearer. You have the agreement of all of the opposition members. You offered it.

Your House leader hasn't exactly given you the correct information. He didn't give us a choice; he gave us an ultimatum: "My way or the highway. You drop your point of privilege, we'll have a select committee." That was not acceptable, that would never be acceptable, and you knew that when you offered that to us.

The fact of the matter is—in your first week of question period, 25th Premier of the province of Ontario, keep your promise.

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: There are absolutely no secrets here, Mr. Speaker. I have said over and over again—in fact, I said it in my remarks yesterday in the speech that I gave on the point of privilege—that we sat down with the opposition and we identified two potential paths forward. One is, they could support the point of privilege that we

anticipated correctly would be raised by the member from Cambridge, a point which we found to be mean-spirited and vindictive; or we could talk about moving ahead with a select committee.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition yesterday made their choice. If they regret that choice, I'm very sorry, but they made their choice. As I have said on a number of occasions this morning in the House and will continue to say, the government, although we did not agree with that motion, will co-operate fully with the committee as it begins its work.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, to the Premier: I am appalled, but not surprised, that more documents have come forward. But even more importantly, Premier, your predecessor's office was asked for documents under freedom of information—Project Vapour documents—some of which had been provided.

The Premier's office said that no such documents existed, even though it was clear from previous documents that had been released that they did exist. Are you engaged in a search in your office for relevant documents?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, a request was made by the committee for documents. Those individuals who were required to respond to that request have worked in good faith and, as we heard this morning, have continued to work in good faith to comply with the committee's request.

The issue of the production of documents to the committee is now before the justice committee through a motion that was passed yesterday. I think all of us are intending to co-operate fully with that committee and, of course, are looking forward to their recommendations. They will be looking at the whole question of document production. And as I say, Mr. Speaker, I think all of us should let that committee become established administratively and continue its work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, back to the Premier: You have said that this is an ongoing process. You've said that you will be open. I'm asking you a question. The OPA obviously went through their documents. Is your office looking for the documents that your predecessor said no longer existed? What is the state of that search for the documents that you know this province deserves?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the committee made a request, and all those who have been charged with that request have worked in good faith to produce the documents. On two occasions now those individuals have come forward, and they have apologized and stated that they have found additional documents. A committee has been charged with this issue and will be looking into it further.

But again, I think it is so important to put this into context. You know, I can't help but think how the

member for Toronto–Danforth has changed his tune when on October 7, 2010, he said, "I don't agree with the Oakville power plant. I don't think it is necessary." Mr. Speaker, what we're talking about is a decision that was supported by every single party of this House. They fought the last election on it, and it's time they come—

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

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, many students in grade 12 are now considering their post-secondary education options. They have been thinking about what they will do once they graduate from high school and whether they can afford attending college or university this coming September.

We, the members of this Legislature, all know the value of post-secondary education, but students and parents in my riding are concerned about the potential costs associated with higher education.

Minister, what is our government doing to keep the costs of education manageable for our low- and middle-income families across the province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank my Scarborough colleague for the question. As indicated in our recent throne speech earlier this week, I'm pleased to confirm that this government will be continuing our 30% Off Ontario Tuition grant. To date, over 200,000 low- and middle-income families have benefitted from these savings. Students can still reaply if they can do so by the end of this month.

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I also want to take this opportunity to say that I and this government stand with the chorus of middle- and lower-income students and their families in condemning the PC plan to eliminate this 30% off tuition grant. We're not going to do that, Mr. Speaker. That plan would cut \$400 million out of the pockets of lower- and middle-income Ontario students and their families. We're not going to go there. This government will continue to do all we can to ensure that we have an accessible, affordable and quality post-secondary education system available to Ontario students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It is good to hear that our government remains committed to the grant. The 30% off tuition grant is important to lower- and middle-income families. Also important is access to the financial assistance needed.

I've read reports in the newspaper this past week about proposals to gear assistance levels to the marks of students. That has sparked considerable concern among low- and middle-income students in my riding. Can the minister advise on whether the government is contemplating such a policy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I have indeed seen those reports over the past week or so, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by assuring students across Ontario that I join them in condemning the notion to base financial assistance on marks. That just doesn't make sense. Many of those students who are struggling with marks may well be those students who we ought to be trying to help the most. Think about who may be in that lower quartile. You think about students who are struggling with socio-economic issues, students who may have part-time jobs, students who may be elite athletes who are trying to balance their training with their work at school. It may be aboriginal students who are adjusting to coming from Far North communities to southern universities. Those are the kind of students we ought to be trying to help the most.

The PC plan to dump those students on the street is economically irresponsible, and, Mr. Speaker, it's social reprehensible. I'm pleased to confirm that we, as a government, will not take that direction.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. I can't believe what has happened today in question period. Premier, you talk a good game about accountability and transparency, but it's our actions that define us, so let's look at yours. The minister who brought us Ornge and eHealth still has her position. The person who stymied every single attempt we've made to make some progress on finding out the truth about the gas plant is still your House leader. Like your predecessor, you're breaking promises and you haven't even broken in your new chair.

Premier, shuffling the boss down a few seats doesn't make for change. It doesn't make for renewal, especially after what happened today, especially what happened when the Minister of Energy stands up. Please, stand in your place and make good on your promise. Strike the select committee today.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you for the question. This all started with the so-called cancellation of two gas plants, Mississauga and Oakville. I want us to think back to October 2011, Mr. Speaker. In October 2011, when the Leader of the Opposition was asked the question of would he scrap the Mississauga plant, he said, "That's right. Done, done, done."

So I ask the Leader of the Opposition, did you calculate what the cost of moving that gas plant would cost? Did you have a budget for it? When you made the commitment to cancel it, did you have a price to cancel it? Answer that question. Or Oakville—did you have a price to cancel it? And I say the same to the NDP. No, you did not. You agreed with us; we agreed with you. Cancel the plant. Did you have a cost to cancel it? The answer is no.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Premier, the Oscars are on Sunday, and I think the movie that best describes question period is Groundhog Day. Every morning we wake up and it's

the same old routine at question period. We keep asking the questions Ontarians want answers for; you keep refusing. Really, Premier, you deserve an Oscar for your portrayal of Dalton McGuinty.

Your House leader—we had a meeting on Tuesday. Your House leader looked me in the face. I asked him when he was going to table this appointment for a select committee. He said to me, "When are you going to drop your contempt motion?" I looked him in the face and said, "I am not going to stand in the way of a member's right to bring a point of privilege in front of this House." He looked at me and said, "This motion's off the table." What do you have to say about that?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, they want answers. They think that the opposition doesn't have to be accountable. They have to be accountable for what they promised in the 2011 election. They promised to cancel and move the Mississauga gas plant. I want to know, what is the price tag they put on their promise or was it just a promise that they weren't prepared to fulfil?

There should be accountability on the part of the opposition. They're not accountable. They make idle promises and then they blame somebody else for doing what they promised to do.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I did mention this yesterday, and I'll mention it again today. We're now starting to move towards the individualizing of question period, and I'm disappointed. It's absolutely frustrating—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —and I don't need anyone to make any editorial comment when I'm trying to get a point across.

It's not right for us to do that. I've already got a list of people. That should be enough.

The member from Timmins–James Bay.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. We're in shock on this side, and I think the public is in shock about how this government has dealt with this. Repeatedly, we have been told that all the documents have been given. Ministers of the crown and members of this government have stood in this House over and over again, and again yesterday during the debate in regard to the motion that struck the committee to deal with this, that no more documents exist. We now found out yet again there are more documents. My colleague Mr. Tabuns asked you a question, and it's a question that you have to answer.

The Premier's office has not released any of the documents relating to the gas plants that were asked for. We're asking you this simple question: When do you plan on doing the search for those documents, and when can we expect that you're actually going to release the documents that are contained in your office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think these questions have been answered in the sense that the issue is now before a committee. We are going to comply with all of the requests from the committee. We are going to do everything that we can, and I've said, Mr. Speaker, that I am going to appear before the committee.

The information should all have come out at the same time. That obviously would have been preferable. All of us would have wished that the information and all the documents could have come out at the same time. The fact is, it's an ongoing process. The search for those documents goes on, and as has been requested by the Legislature and the committee, those documents are being searched.

I would have preferred that they all came out at the same time. We're going to comply with the request from the committee. I have said that I will appear before the committee when asked and provide the information that I'm asked for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So, am I to draw from the answer to this question that in fact there are more documents, because the way that you're answering, you're saying you are conducting a search and there may be other documents.

This is a serious matter. The government has stood in this House repeatedly, has gone before the media and said that all the documents that exist on this have been released. We now find out letters from the OPA and documents that are contained within their computer systems were not released. We have to believe that somebody knew within the OPA and somebody knew within the government.

So I ask you again: When are we going to get all of the documents related to this and, specifically, those documents related to your office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat what I said earlier, that the committee made a request for documents. Those people who were—

Interjection.

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

Hon. John Milloy: —in a responsive situation worked in good faith to produce those documents.

Mr. Speaker, what has been discussed in this place last fall and discussed in this place this morning is that further documents have come to light. The minister, as he reported to the House, found out about it last night and stood in his place before question period to inform the House of all that he knew, with further details coming from the OPA this afternoon.

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I would also remind the member that a committee of this Legislature is in the process of being established. It will be seized with this matter, and they will have a chance to explore this issue and talk to those people who were asked to respond to the original request by the committee.

SENIORS

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Congratulations, Minister, on your very well-deserved appointment.

Minister, it is a well-reported fact that our province has an aging population. According to the statistics I have seen in Ontario, Ontario is home to approximately 1.8 million people over the age of 65. That's 13.9% of the entire population of our province, and it's growing. Experts are predicting that by the year 2036, the number of people over the age of 65 in Ontario will double to 4.2 million.

Minister, I'm not the only one who's aware of these statistics, as they are quoted to me by my constituents of Ajax–Pickering. They want to make sure that the government is taking the necessary steps to make sure—and to protect and look after our senior population. They want to make sure that their grandparents and their parents enjoy the senior years—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Joe Dickson: —make sure that that happens.

My question to you is, Mr. Minister, what is our government doing to protect seniors in the province of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's good to see you back in the chair.

Let me say thank you. I'm very grateful to the outstanding member from Ajax–Pickering for his question. The member has been a very untiring supporter of seniors' issues, and I'm really glad to answer his question. Let me say that I'm also delighted to speak on behalf of and represent all the seniors of Ontario.

Interjection: Including Monte.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes.

It's no secret that our seniors' community is growing older, and as they are growing older, they are living longer. I think that is good; I think that is very nice. I think this is what we like to see. But I think what we would like to see even more is to see that our community grows older, lives longer and lives healthier.

I think some of the programs that the member has mentioned in his question address exactly that. We see the statistics. The statistics that the member has mentioned speak exactly to that, Speaker, because our community—

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: I thank you, Mr. Minister, for the response. My constituents will be happy to know that our government is addressing our province's aging population head-on, and I will be proud to tell them our government has gone to great lengths to make it easier for our seniors to access all programs being offered.

I know that Ontario has already been busy implementing programs and services for many years to help older adults. Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors will build upon a solid foundation of what has already been done, such as the recently launched Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, worth up to \$1,500 annually; the first-ever Retirement Homes Act, 2010; our Aging at Home Strategy, 2007; and the end of mandatory retirement by age 65, in 2006. Ontario's strategy to combat elder abuse, the first—

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

Hon. Mario Sergio: The member is quite right. We have quite a number of plans and programs that seniors can avail themselves of and that are being provided to them. They can assess them.

Some of the plans that the member has mentioned are there, and they were specifically put in place to make our seniors—to give them an opportunity, because after all, our seniors want a choice, and they want a chance to access what they need and when they need it. The action plan is one of those plans that does exactly that.

We have the service for seniors. He has mentioned elder abuse. As a matter of fact, it's a first in Ontario. We have provided the Ontario retirement act, and it's another first for Ontario and Canada as well.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. Premier, to paraphrase Shakespeare, something is rotten in the province of Ontario. Given what we heard from your Minister of Energy today, how can you stand in your place and refuse to appoint a select committee now, for the province of Ontario, to deal with the gas plant cancellation and relocation issue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very pleased to outline to members yet again the nature of the discussions that took place with House leaders over the past number of days, where we fully acknowledged the concern that exists around the gas plants.

We anticipated, obviously correctly, that the member from Cambridge had the opportunity to raise his point of privilege, something I totally respect, but we also knew that it would come to a vote.

What we said to the members opposite was that there were two ways to proceed. One way was for them to support a potential point of privilege; the other was to look at a mechanism such as a select committee. They made their choice. We saw it yesterday; it was not our choice.

But once again, we look forward to working very closely with the committee. We will co-operate fully with

it, and many of the issues that have been discussed this morning will, I anticipate, come before—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know, whether it's the McGuinty government or the McWynny government, nothing seems to change here in the province of Ontario. The way she dismisses the questions by punting them over to the House leader is not acceptable.

This is a vitally important issue. New information came to the floor of this Legislature today. You made a commitment to the Leader of the Opposition and to the leader of the third party by letter, and you released that to the public through the press. Once you do that, that is your commitment to the people of Ontario as well.

You made a commitment to establish a select committee to get to the bottom of this issue. Nothing less is acceptable. I tell you to stand in your place today and do what you have promised: Establish a select committee so this can stop. We've got to get to the bottom of this.

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The judges at the Academy Awards are going to have a tough time, with the theatrics we've seen across the way.

Mr. Speaker, we spoke about a select committee; it was rejected by the opposition. But what has come forward is a committee that arose from the member from Cambridge's point of privilege. I agree with the honourable member that this is an important matter, and I know that the committee will be looking at all aspects of the document production. As I've said earlier today, and I repeat again, the government will co-operate fully with the committee as it undertakes its very important work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Cambridge on a point of order.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent of this House that the Minister of Energy, on behalf of the government, attest in writing to the Speaker and this House that all documents related to the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga, without reservation, equivocation or mental reservation of any kind, have indeed been tabled, and that the government shall immediately table, with the Clerk of this House, said documents in the following formats—one set each of printed paper copies for the caucus of the official opposition, the caucus of the third party, the Auditor General of Ontario, and the Queen's Park press gallery—and that electronic copies, scanned in a searchable format, also be provided to the aforementioned groups.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is there unanimous consent?

I heard a no.

There are no deferred votes.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):—I'm already in the middle of this; sorry—until 1 p.m. this afternoon.
The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: We in Perth–Wellington have what is lacking from this government, and it's called good common sense. We know a wasteful, ineffective and aggravating government program when we see it. That's exactly what we have in the Drive Clean program.

Constituents are contacting me with their problems in trying to get their clean, late-model vehicles to pass the government's revised emissions test. They also want to know why we have to get the test done but our neighbouring counties do not. It doesn't make any sense.

Dealers have their own horror stories. Instead of measuring what matters—actual emissions from the tailpipe—the government demands they use a new, complicated computerized test. It's prone to failure, even for perfectly good cars. To get some cars to pass the new test, technicians are advised to drive the car for 30 kilometres at speeds of up to 65 miles per hour, all without stopping. Try that in small-town Ontario.

The Auditor General specifically warned the Liberals not to implement the new tests until the technical problems were resolved. Typically, the government ignored the auditor's advice. They also ignored his findings on value for money. Instead, they're just making the problems worse while picking even more from drivers' pockets.

I've met with dealerships and repair shops across Perth–Wellington. I have heard first-hand the Drive Clean program is failing. It is clear to us that this government is also failing the test—the test of common sense.

I want to encourage my constituents to make their voices heard by signing the petition available at scrapdriveclean.ca.

DEEPA MEHTA

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's my pleasure to recognize the achievements of one of my constituents, Deepa Mehta. Ms. Mehta is an internationally renowned filmmaker whose films include her Elements Trilogy—Fire, Earth and Water, the last of which was the first film by a non-French Canadian to be nominated for Academy Award for best foreign language film.

Her latest film is *Midnight's Children*, based on the Booker prize-winning novel by Salman Rushdie, and it is nominated for the best motion picture at the 2013 Canadian Screen Awards, which takes place on March 3. She's also nominated for best director. For these achievements, Ms. Mehta was awarded the Order of Ontario last month.

In a riding that includes so many talented artists, she is an exemplar of the highest standards of excellence. I wish to thank her for all she has contributed to my riding and the world of film, and I will be cheering for her on March 3.

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES FAIR

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to rise in the House today and share with you and the rest of the communities about our community fair. It's a government community fair that the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and I have been putting on for eight years. It's an opportunity for the people to come and have an understanding of what government provides in terms of services. It's an opportunity for what's occurring in the community, whether it's sometimes for profit or sometimes not-for-profit organizations that are supportive of the issues that are in the community.

I'll give you a good example. It might be LAMP, it might be MPAC, it could be Parks Ontario, and what it is about is, 3,000 people each year come and have an opportunity to learn what's happening in their government, also to find out what's going on in their community, and then, of course, to network, and that's really what it's all about.

It's going to happen this Saturday, February 23, at Cloverdale Mall, on the East Mall in Etobicoke, from 11 until 3:30. It really is a chance for folks to be able to talk to someone one-on-one about an issue that impacts and affects them, without having sometimes to pick up that phone and get the “hold for” or “choose one of.” Instead, they get an actual person that they can speak with. It helps them and it helps us, obviously, because then they get to know and understand what is available for them in terms of the government.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to share this with you. As I said, Laurel Broten and I have been doing this for eight years—extraordinarily successful.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise today to question why our new Premier and Minister of Agriculture overlooked food. Last week at the swearing-in ceremony when Premier Wynne separated the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, she took on the role of Minister of Agriculture part-time and created a Minister of Rural Affairs, but in the whole ceremony there was no mention of food.

When she took the oath, Premier Wynne clearly stated, “as Premier and president of the council and Minister of Agriculture of the province of Ontario”—there was no mention of food. The people of Ontario want to know: Did our new Minister of Agriculture forget about the food portion of the ministry or did she think it wasn't important enough to mention?

Premier, there should be someone in cabinet to voice the importance of food and to consider the impact of new regulations and legislation on our food manufacturers and retailers.

According to a recent economic impact study for the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors, Ontario's food manufacturing industry is a \$39-billion sector with over 120,000 direct jobs and close to \$7 billion in exports.

We believe in the importance of Ontario's food system, from our farmers to our food processors, our food terminal, retailers and farmers' markets. It's hard to believe this government's claim to support local food if they couldn't even bother to officially name someone to be responsible for it. I hope that the Premier will explain whether she deliberately eliminated food or whether she simply just forgot about it.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Since being opened in 1968, the Experimental Lakes Area in my riding has been home to groundbreaking research that has not only increased our scientific understanding of freshwater ecosystems, but has helped protect our drinking water, enhanced fish and aquatic species conservation, enhanced policy for all levels of government and has been relied upon by industry to enhance their projects.

Even though this facility has a modest annual budget of less than \$2 million, it is set to be closed by the federal government at the end of March, bringing this invaluable research to an end.

Despite assurances by Ontario's Minister of the Environment this past spring that this government was opposed to the closure, other than co-authoring a letter, the government has failed to act. This lack of action is appalling, given that the province has the power to prevent the closure by enforcing a bilateral agreement that was signed with the federal government, which requires all 58 lakes to be fully rehabilitated if the site is to be closed.

At a projected cost of more than \$50 million, it is much more cost-effective to keep the site open and to allow the invaluable research of the Experimental Lakes Area to continue.

Speaker, this is a very worthwhile facility that needs to remain open, and this provincial government has the power and the influence to see that it happens. Keeping it open will not cost the Ontario government or taxpayers one cent.

Today, I am once again calling on the provincial government to take meaningful action to ensure that this facility remains open.

FAMILY DAY WALKATHON

Mr. Bob Delaney: The Mississauga Muslim community and other western Mississauga faith communities spent Family Day at Mississauga City Centre, raising

\$70,000 for the Credit Valley Hospital Foundation in the third annual Family Day Walkathon.

Each year, the Mississauga Muslim community and their partners have exceeded their fundraising target for the Credit Valley Hospital Foundation. In three years, the Family Day Walkathon has raised a total of \$195,000 for our local hospital.

Our good friend, and a 2012 Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal awardee, Abdul Qayyum Mufti of the Islamic Circle of North America, organized the first Family Day Walkathon. A.Q. Mufti's work on this and many other community events has brought our growing Muslim community into the Mississauga mainstream.

Mufti said of his efforts to bring together the best of Canadian and Islamic culture, values, cultures and traditions, "We are Canadians, no matter what religion we belong to, no matter what culture we practise and no matter what language we speak at home. When we come to a good cause, we should work together shoulder to shoulder. The concept we are trying to spread is neighbours helping neighbours."

1310

Ontario says thank you—shukria—to A.Q. Mufti and to our Muslim- and other faith-community neighbours. Well done. Thank you very much.

SCOUTS AND GUIDES MOVEMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a privilege to rise during Scout/Guide Week to celebrate the thousands of young people and their adult leaders across Ontario. Scout/Guide Week in Canada begins the Sunday before February 22, the birthday of Scouts founder Robert Baden-Powell and his wife, Olave Baden-Powell. From February 17th to 24th this year, Scouts Canada and Girl Guides of Canada hold special events to highlight the tremendous role the movement plays as a positive and powerful force in the lives of our youth.

I'm proud that Scouts and Girl Guides remain a way of life in my riding of Leeds-Grenville. Every week you'll find thriving troops of Sparks and Beavers, Brownies and Cubs, Pathfinders and Venturers meeting in communities like Merrickville, Spencerville, Mallorytown, Brockville and Prescott. These young people are excited to follow a path explored by their parents and grandparents before them. Along the way, they learn values like leadership, respect, courage and co-operation that make them more resilient individuals and better citizens. For that, we owe a tremendous gratitude to those dedicated leaders who give freely of their time to keep this tradition alive.

Nowhere is that commitment more evident than in Bidy Adams and Marjorie Boyle, both of whom are in their eighties and continue to volunteer every week as leaders of the 2nd Brockville Sparks. I ask this House to join me in offering a sincere thank-you to leaders like Bidy and Marjorie and to wish everyone in the Scouts and Guides movement our best wishes for a bright future.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise today to reiterate our government's commitment to keeping auto insurance affordable and available for nine million Ontarians. Auto insurance fraud is not a victimless crime, as it affects all of us. It leads to higher premiums and it makes the roads more dangerous.

We're implementing the recommendations of the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force. This will help Ontario drivers protect against fraud and reduce insurance rates across Ontario. The initial results from the implementation of the first round of recommendations from the task force indicate changes are working to stabilize rates. New regulatory amendments being introduced will help prevent auto insurance fraud and protect consumers by requiring insurers to provide claimants with all reasons for denying a claim, giving claimants the right to receive bimonthly detailed statements of benefits paid out on their behalf, increasing the role of claimants in fraud prevention, making providers subject to sanctions for overcharging insurers for goods and services, and banning them from asking consumers to sign blank claim forms.

The Liberal government continues to make changes to Ontario's auto insurance system to help address fraud and reduce the overutilization of accident benefits and excessive assessment costs. Last year, we had implemented a package of auto insurance reforms designed to reduce costs in the auto insurance system and ensure more accident benefit dollars go to treating people injured in auto accidents.

I urge all Ontarians to help the regulators identify fraudulent activities. Together we can make our insurance system more affordable, available and fair.

TOWN OF AURORA

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise today to pay tribute to my hometown of Aurora. On February 3, Aurora marked its 150th anniversary with the mayor's sesquicentennial levee, hosted by Mayor Geoffrey Dawe. The event launched what will be a year-long celebration of the town's proud heritage. In recognition of Aurora's exemplary commitment to honour and to preserve its heritage and culture, the town was awarded the Prince of Wales Prize for Municipal Heritage Leadership and the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Community Leadership and heritage conservation and promotion.

The childhood home of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, Aurora was also home to many notable athletes, such as former Olympic champion skier Brian Stemmler, equestrian Olympians Jim Elder and Jim Day, and numerous NHL players including Harry "Hap" Holmes, Tie Domi and Mike Kitchen. To its more than 55,000 residents, there is no better place to live than the town of Aurora.

To commemorate the sesquicentennial year, a flag was unveiled at the mayor's levee in Town Park. I would like

to congratulate Victoria Harris, a grade 4 student from Northern Lights Public School who won the flag-design contest. I ask all members to join me in officially designating the town of Aurora as the centre of the universe during its sesquicentennial year. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to tell the member that he'd get an argument out of Walter Gretzky, who says Brantford is the centre of the universe all the time. But maybe we can trade.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Wilson assumes ballot item number 4, Mr. Klees assumes ballot item number 16 and Mr. Walker assumes ballot item number 63.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH PROFESSION CORPORATIONS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT AUX SOCIÉTÉS PROFESSIONNELLES DE LA SANTÉ

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 4, An Act respecting health profession corporations / Projet de loi 4, Loi relative aux sociétés professionnelles de la santé.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The bill would give and allow all health care profession corporations to have the same opportunities that are available to other physicians and dentists today. It will allow family members to partner in small business to allow them non-voting shares and would allow for cross-profession relationships. Mr. Speaker, this is fairness for the Regulated Health Professions Act professionals.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Michael Coteau: Before I begin, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Premier for placing her trust in me. It's an honour to serve in her cabinet, and I'm excited about the opportunity to work with Ontario newcomers. I look forward to continuing the good work

of my predecessor to ensure immigration works for our economy and newcomers and all Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform my colleagues that February is Black History Month in Ontario and in Canada. As a black Ontarian, as a Canadian, I can say with pride that this month is a celebration of my history.

It's a celebration of Canada's history. Canada's racial, cultural and religious diversity is what makes this nation such a great place. It makes us greater than the sum of our parts. Since before Confederation, the black community has helped weave the social, cultural and economic tapestry that makes up this great society. That is particularly true here in Ontario, where 60% of black Canadians have chosen to live.

But there is something else which we like to take pride in, Mr. Speaker. If black history in the United States is largely the story of people casting off the shackles of slavery, then black history in Canada is the story of a country that has become a beacon of hope.

"I'm going straight to Canada," sang one man who was fleeing Tennessee via the Underground Railroad. "I'm going straight to Canada, where coloured men are free." That was in 1860, and the song is called the Song of the Free.

Since those days, the story of black people in Canada and Ontario has been one of courage, determination, dignity and accomplishment. It's a story that everyone in this Legislature can be proud of. It's our story.

Over the last two years, we lost several men whose lives were a testament to those virtues. Among them, they include Lincoln Alexander, the former Ontario Lieutenant Governor and Canada's first black MP; Charlie Roach, who was a human rights activist and lawyer; Leonard Braithwaite, civil rights activist and Ontario's first black MPP, elected to this chamber 50 years ago in 1963; and Dudley Laws, civil rights activist and founder of the Black Action Defence Committee.

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Finally, we lost Herb Carnegie, whom many regard as the best black hockey player who never played in the NHL. He never played simply because he was black, but he cleared the path for many talented black Canadian players who have played ever since.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's black community today includes artists, scientists, playwrights, journalists, musicians, businesspeople and dedicated public servants. It is a legacy all Ontarians benefit from, and it makes us stronger as a province. I urge my colleagues to use this month of February to reflect on our community, the black community in Ontario, and to look at their contributions that continue to make our province proud.

I'd like to ask this House for unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence after the responses to recall the contributions made by these giants and many others of the black Ontario community whom we lost this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll deal with that unanimous consent after ministers' statements. Statements from ministries? No others?

Time for response.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am honoured to rise in this House and speak on behalf of the people of Wellington-Halton Hills and on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus. I am privileged to have this chance to recognize Black History Month.

I want to begin by congratulating the new Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and extend my personal best wishes to him as he undertakes his new responsibilities. I look forward to working with him.

We all know that Ontario's black community has a long and proud history in our province. In fact, black history is Ontario history. The two are inextricably linked. The Ontario Black History Society reminds us that black Canadians fought valiantly alongside English, French and aboriginal Canadians in the War of 1812, including the Battle of Queenston Heights and the Battle of Lundy's Lane.

Thousands of escaped slaves fleeing the oppression and scourge of slavery in the southern United States arrived in Ontario via the Underground Railroad in the 19th century. They established early settlements in such towns as Windsor, Chatham, Guelph and St. Catharines. They became Canadians and raised their families in freedom. They and their descendants went on to become farmers, teachers, business owners, doctors and lawyers. Their contributions were fundamental in helping to build the Ontario we know and celebrate today.

Last November, Canada mourned the loss of Lincoln Alexander, one of our greatest Canadians, who made a meaningful and lasting contribution to both our province and our country. He was a man who broke barriers and led the way for the next generation of leaders who follow in his footsteps, inspired by his example. It was appropriate and fitting that the throne speech presented to this House two days ago began with a tribute to the Honourable Lincoln Alexander.

I will always remember an encounter I had with Linc in August 2008, when he visited Wellington county to help unveil an historical heritage plaque in Glen Allan, which I will revisit again in a minute. "Good afternoon, Your Honour," I said as I greeted him. "They said there would be some big shots here," he said in reply. I smiled, protesting that I really didn't see myself as a big shot. He said, "All you MPPs think you're big shots." We both laughed, remembering that he, too, had been a parliamentarian, and so was by his own definition a big shot himself.

Lincoln Alexander grew up in an Ontario that was far less tolerant and inclusive than the province we know today, but as Sandra Martin wrote in the *Globe and Mail* shortly after his death, he was a man who had the capacity "to turn rejections and despicable slurs into a personal challenge to excel."

Lincoln Alexander was first elected to the House of Commons as a Progressive Conservative in 1968, becoming Canada's first black member of Parliament. He held his Hamilton riding through five consecutive elections, and in 1979 was appointed Minister of Labour, earning the distinction of becoming Canada's first black

cabinet minister. After he retired from partisan politics in 1980, he served as chair of the Ontario Workers' Compensation Board, and later broke yet more new ground, becoming Canada's first black Lieutenant Governor when he was appointed LG in Ontario in 1985.

That was the position he held when I was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1990. When he came into this chamber for a throne speech or other special occasion, he had a regal bearing and a manner that ironically seemed to be down-to-earth at the same time.

Lincoln Alexander inspired thousands of young Canadians with his life story and example of overcoming discrimination, pursuing excellence and working for a better Canada. He inspired a new generation of leaders who continue to help shape our country and our province today.

As some members of the House may remember, in 2008 I brought forward a bill recognizing August 1 as Emancipation Day in Ontario. This was to commemorate the day in 1834 when slavery was abolished in Canada and throughout the British Empire. That bill also holds the distinction of being the first bill ever introduced in this House to be jointly sponsored by members from different parties. I had approached Maria Van Bommel, and she graciously agreed to work with me on it.

We brought this bill forward together after I had attended the ceremony I referred to earlier in the community of Glen Allan in Wellington county in 2008 to unveil that plaque commemorating the Queen's Bush Settlement. As I was leaving the ceremony that day, a man whom I'd never met before approached me. He told me that he thought there should be a bill in the Legislature recognizing August 1 of every year as Emancipation Day in Ontario. As I was driving home, I kept thinking about what he had said. Shortly afterwards, as a result of that conversation, I asked legislative counsel to draft the legislation that was eventually passed into law by this House, with support from all three parties.

While working on the bill, I had the opportunity to get to know Dr. Rosemary Sadlier, the president of the Ontario Black History Society. Rosemary has spent countless hours volunteering with the society because she firmly believes, and I agree, in the importance of educating Ontarians about black history and the significant achievements of the black community in building our communities all across the province. This is a chapter of our history that should make us all very proud.

Black History Month is an opportunity to pay tribute to the legacy of countless individuals, including the late Lincoln Alexander, and the lasting contributions that they have made to our province and to our country. I hope that everyone in this House and indeed all Ontarians will take the opportunity to learn more about this history and the important role that the black community has had in building our great province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Michael Prue: This is a day we stand up once a year to talk about black history in Canada, in Toronto, in Ontario; and we do it with a great sense of pride as Canadians, as Ontarians.

I listened to my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills as he carefully and thoughtfully talked about Lincoln Alexander.

I note the other names here. I had the opportunity over my life to know all of them and to know them very well—not only Linc, who was a fixture in and around this place, but also Charlie Roach, who was a lawyer of some renown. Although he never became a Canadian citizen, because he wouldn't swear an oath to the Queen, he was fiercely, fiercely loyal to this country. I worked with him on many immigration issues over the years.

Leonard Braithwaite: I knew him too when he was a parliamentarian, and I actually knew members of his family quite well.

Dudley Laws, whom we often sparred with in immigration when I worked there—he was a gentleman. He was able to put forward his ideals in the most strong and most forceful way and actually was able to produce, I think, much better race relations in Toronto than existed before he started.

Last, but not least: Herb Carnegie. I have worked alongside his daughter Bernice and fundraised over many years while I was here in the Legislature.

We are going to miss all of them, and we need to give them a long moment of silence.

But back to the issue: Every year, we have this month. We set it aside for the contributions of people who have come, of course, from many lands. We talk about black history in Canada and in Ontario, but we have to remember that although almost all of the people can trace their ancestry from Africa, they did not come directly from Africa, most of them. The people who have come to this country from many lands have come from the Caribbean; they have come from Africa itself; they have come from the United States; they have come via Europe. I've met many people who lived in England for a time and who found that it was just not as hospitable a country as they might expect here.

I also have the privilege of owning a summer home in Amherstburg, Ontario, which, for those who may not know the site, is about 25 or 30 kilometres due south of Windsor. When I say that to people, they think, "How can you still be in Canada?" But they look at the geography, and you are. Amherstburg has the most wonderful black history museum. It has black history churches. The entire town was the terminus for the Underground Railroad. It was the place where black people fleeing from the United States could first find freedom, from crossing that Detroit River, from crossing onto what is today called Bob-Lo Island and then into Amherstburg itself. It has been beautifully preserved, and I think of that today as well.

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I think about the waves of immigration from many lands who have come here and joined us and have contributed so much to the people of this country. They have contributed in every field and endeavour with enormous enthusiasm. So we celebrate, and we remember. Let me put it better: We remember in February, but it behooves

all of us to celebrate throughout the year. There cannot be and should not be just one month to celebrate black history. There must be all the months of the year, because the citizens who have come and joined us from many lands have a history that we embrace.

It's that celebration—and I don't want to end on a bad note but I feel very aggrieved, Mr. Speaker. I raised this issue with you last year in March, when the Greek community was here to celebrate their heritage. Members of the opposition are often denied an opportunity to celebrate with Ontarians whom we should be celebrating with and whom we want to be part of. Tonight, the Premier will be addressing the Black History Month reception. It will be hosted by our new minister, whom I wish all the best. However, it will be held in room 247, which, for those watching on television, is the government caucus room, to which members of the opposition are not ever invited, cannot attend. That means all of us on this side cannot celebrate with you. I checked; none of us were invited. I checked: Can I go to room 247 as the Speaker ruled last March? No, I cannot. Therefore you have a celebration which all of us would like to be part of, but we cannot.

I mean no umbrage to this minister or to people in black history, but I think we need to come to some better kind of conclusion. If the government is going to use that caucus room in the future, then all people, all members of this Legislature, should be invited. And I say that I wish everyone—everyone from Ms. Sadlier and everyone who was part of this—all of the best. I celebrate with them even though it's going to be in spirit only. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is seeking unanimous consent to observe a moment's silence in respect and tribute to the notable deceased members of the black community. Do we agree? Agreed. Please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Pray be seated. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon and to present once again the first petition of the day. This is from a constituent of mine who I know has worked on this issue, and I want to read it on his behalf. It's the Lyme disease petition:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek

these" treatments and/or diagnoses "in the USA and Europe;

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;"

Whereas these undersigned persons "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to" all patients and their families and physicians in the province of Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this on behalf of my constituent, whose name I would like to put on the record: Brian Barraball.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I am pleased to present the following petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the only province in Canada that does not allow the provincial Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities;

"Whereas the people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to address their issues;

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

"To grant the Ombudsman of Ontario the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities."

I support this and I will affix my signature.

LYME DISEASE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further petitions? The member for Haliburton-Brock-Kawartha Lakes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Close enough. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada;

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

Brought to me by Margaret Anthony from Victoria West District Women’s Institute. I’ll sign my name to that and hand it to page Justin.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has announced the end of overnight camping in 10 provincial parks in northern Ontario...; and

“Whereas the decision will result in job losses for northern Ontarians and negatively impact tourism and northern Ontario’s way of life; and

“Whereas local stakeholders and municipalities have not been consulted on these closures and have been denied the opportunity to make these parks more sustainable;

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

“To immediately suspend plans to cancel overnight camping at the 10 provincial parks named above; and

“To consult with local municipalities, stakeholders and regional economic development organizations regarding the long-term viability of preserving northern Ontario’s provincial parks.”

I support this and give this to page Jessica to deliver.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

“Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at” local “hospitals in Ontario on behalf of its more than 300,000 members; and

“Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income and cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal has said in an editorial that parking fees” at hospitals “are a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients who have enough to deal with” in aging already;

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

“That Ontario’s members of provincial Parliament and the Dalton McGuinty”—now Kathleen Wynne—“government take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals” in our community.

I’m pleased to sign and support this, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the seniors in Ontario, of which I’m one.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further petitions? Further petitions?

There being none, orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, seeing that a previous order of the House has cancelled private members’ time, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. Monday.
The House adjourned at 1341.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor-Tecumseh	

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Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Monte McNaughton
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Mike Colle, Rosario Marchese
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
Jeff Yurek
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Joe Dickson, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Paul Miller
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

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Steven Del Duca, Bob Delaney
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
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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

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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