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Monday 2 March 2015

Lundi 2 mars 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 March 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 mars 2015

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Maggie Head, from former Speaker Steve Peters's office. She's the government relations manager with the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors. They have their reception at noon, and I'd like to welcome all the doctors to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In our galleries today will be representatives and members of the Wine Council of Ontario; they are here at Queen's Park. Their reception will occur this afternoon in rooms 228 and 230 from 5 to 7:30 p.m. It's an opportunity for all members of the House to sample Ontario's very best VQA wines.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Raza Shah, of the naturopathic doctors, to Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am pleased to introduce Emily Maher. Emily is here on an internship coordinated through the Clerks' office. She recently graduated with a bachelor of arts in political science, with a minor in women's studies, from the University of Akron, Ohio. She will be interning in my office for the next several weeks. Please join me in welcoming her to my team and to the Legislature.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence, I am pleased to make this introduction: Page Arlyne James's mother, Sheliagh Flynn James, and her father, George James, will be in the public gallery this morning. On behalf of the member and the assembly, I'd like to welcome them.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce, in the west members' gallery, Michelle and Rob Hamilton, from the riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Along with Maggie Head, I'd also like to introduce Dr. Elvis Ali, who is the head of the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors.

As well, we are joined this morning by Steven Muir, who is the senior staff member in my constituency office.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am pleased to introduce Angela Hanlon. She's a naturopathic doctor and chair of the North Huron Family Health Team. She's also on the board of OAND.

M. Grant Crack: Il me fait grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à ma fille, Chloé.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce my daughter, Chloé, in the east gallery, and her boyfriend, Joel Trotter. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Christine Elliott: I'd like to introduce Mr. Chris Eaton, who is here today. He's the father of page captain Riley Eaton, from the great riding of Whitby–Oshawa.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I hope everyone will join me in welcoming Dr. Raza Shah this morning. Dr. Shah is a naturopathic doctor and clinical director at the St. Jacobs Naturopathic Clinic, just north of Waterloo. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce four naturopathic doctors from the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors who are here with us today. They are Michelle Meyer, Barbara Weiss, Lisa Doran and Stephanie Scuik. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, we have a very special guest: Ms. Gerry Rogers. She is a member of the Newfoundland House of Assembly. Her riding is St. John's Centre, and she is with us this morning. They are looking at a select committee on mental health and addictions, Speaker, something that I know you hold dear. I'm pleased to welcome her to Queen's Park.

Hon. David Zimmer: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Dr. Bob Bernhardt, who is the president of the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, which is located in the lovely riding of Willowdale.

Ms. Christine Elliott: I have another introduction. I'd like to introduce Dr. Leigh Arseneau, who is also here with the naturopathic doctors today. Welcome.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce a former page from my riding—who is in the gallery—John Gobin, and his grade 10 class from Delphi Secondary Alternative School. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Cosmin Decuseara. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the MPP from Oshawa, I'd like to introduce Amber Bowes, the page captain for today, and her mother, Katherine Bowes; her father, Scott Bowes; her sister, Ashley Bowes, who was a former page; her grandmother, Ilah Dalk; her grandfather, Dennis Dalk; and family friends Chrisma Hodgens, Alan Hodgens and Keira Hodgens.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, we welcome representatives to the precinct from the Wine Council of Ontario. All are invited to their reception this evening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today, we have, from the riding of Brant, Dr. Alfred Hauk, here on lobby day. Doctor, welcome, and we're glad you're here.

Also, not my brother Joe, but Steve Peters, member from Elgin–Middlesex–London in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments, and Speaker in the 39th Parliament.

ERNEST CÔTÉ

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Ernest Côté, 1913 to 2015, one of the last World War II veterans, who passed away recently at the age of 101, with representatives from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes, to be followed by a moment of silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the Attorney General.

It's a great honour to stand in this House to pay tribute to the life of the great Canadian Ernest Côté.

Monsieur le Président, j'ai l'honneur aujourd'hui de parler d'un héros, un héros qui a le pouvoir de nous inspirer en tant que fonctionnaires publics, en tant que citoyens et en tant que Canadiens.

Ernest Côté captured the hearts of Canadians when he courageously survived a home invasion last year. But of course, he will be remembered for much more than that. Throughout his life, Ernest Côté dedicated himself to his country and to his fellow Canadians.

Ernest Côté's life of service for Canada began in the Second World War, when he joined the Royal 22nd Regiment as a lieutenant. By 1943, he was a lieutenant colonel in the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division. In this role, Côté played a part in planning the logistics for Canada's D-Day operations on Juno Beach. After serving for five years in Europe, Côté returned to Canada and retired from the armed forces.

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In a recent interview, Ernest's daughter Denyse Côté said her father "looked at his career as being a career of service, I think. He was serving Canada."

This career of serving Canada continued for Côté when he returned from World War II. After risking his life for our country, our values and our people, Côté went to work in public service. He joined the Department of External Affairs, where he enjoyed a 30-year career. Some of his notable accomplishments included serving as Deputy Solicitor General from 1968 to 1972, representing Canada at the early meetings of the United Nations General Assembly and helping to draft the charter of the World Health Organization.

In the early 1970s, he served as Canada's ambassador to Finland until he retired in 1975. But of course retirement didn't stop Côté from keeping involved. Côté travelled to France last summer to mark the anniversary of D-Day. He was also one of the 50 recipients of a flag

from the Prime Minister on flag day for his tremendous life of service to Canada.

In his personal life, Côté married the late Madeleine Frémont. They had four children: Michel Frémont-Côté, Benoit, Denyse and Lucie. It was his family who were with him last week when he passed away at the age of 101.

While many of us never met Ernest Côté, we are all familiar with the sacrifices he made, the meaningful work he did and the tremendous legacy he leaves behind.

It's truly an honour today to be able to join all the parties in this Legislature to pay homage to an individual who dedicated so much for all of us.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: C'est un honneur pour moi de rendre hommage à M. Ernest Côté, le grand héros d'Ottawa–Vanier. Précieuses et rares sont les occasions d'honorer de véritables héros, et Ernest Côté est la définition même du grand héros canadien dans tous les sens du terme.

Humble et optimiste, M. Côté a, tout au long de sa vie, donné de sa personne. Il s'est donné à son pays dans l'armée canadienne, comme mentionné par la première ministre, et comme haut fonctionnaire et diplomate. Il s'est aussi donné à l'éducation comme gouverneur de l'Université d'Ottawa, puis comme l'un des régents de l'Université de Sudbury. Il s'est donné à sa communauté comme ardent défenseur du français, mais aussi du bilinguisme. Il disait que posséder les deux langues officielles, c'est de devenir quelqu'un de plus complet.

Pour finir, je tiens à partager mes condoléances les plus profondes à sa famille, qui lui a permis de tant se donner. Je rends hommage à feu son épouse, Madeleine; à ses quatre enfants, Michel, Benoît, Denyse et Lucie; et à ses petits-enfants, Isa, Étienne, Stéphane et Tess. Merci d'avoir partagé votre héros avec nous.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: When you are going through hell, keep going: a simple enough statement but one, once spoken by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, that would become the defiant call to action by Britain and her allies in the Second World War. The boldness, the audacity and, frankly, the clarity of those words still echo around the free world even today as the clarion call for the brave and the courageous.

Many young Canadian men answered that call between 1939 and 1945. They would become known as Canada's greatest generation. They built our country. Because of them, Canada came of age as a nation.

Ernest Côté was born in Edmonton, a lawyer and a French Canadian soldier with the famed Montreal-based Van Doos—was one of them.

After graduating from Laval, Ernest Côté left for England as a lieutenant with the Royal 22nd Regiment just months after being admitted to the bar in Alberta. Eventually he would be in charge of logistics as Canada prepared for the invasion of Normandy on the beach of Juno, one of our greatest military accomplishments, one that still instills national pride in every Canadian.

Mr. Côté went on to become a diplomat with external affairs and deputy minister with veterans affairs, among

other government departments. He exemplified what it meant to be a Canadian public servant; a war hero who would go on to speak at the United Nations on Canada's behalf; a governor at the University of Ottawa and a regent at the University of Sudbury. He supported the Canadian Geographic and l'Hôpital Montfort. Above all, he was committed to keeping Canada's legacy of the Second World War alive.

And I'm grateful he did. Let me explain. There are days when I walk into this chamber, as I know others do, feeling a bit overwhelmed; I often look to the ceiling. I think about our founding fathers and I think about those who sacrificed in our world wars and subsequent wars. I think of how small I am, and how small we all are, in the context of those giants. I think of the sacrifices of that generation to maintain peace, order and good governance.

It's not lost on me that we have freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of worship. We got that because of Ernest Côté's generation. Those who fought in the Second World War, it's important to remember, fought to either protect or to regain those freedoms.

It's also not lost on me that when Ernest Côté and his generation went to fight in the Second World War, this assembly was nearly homogenous. Forget the names Lisa, Christine, Andrea, Cheri, Deb or Kathleen. It wasn't until the end of the war that there was just one—Agnes. There weren't names like Fedeli, Yakabuski, Gretzky, Singh, Damerla or Naqvi. Ontario's first female Premier, and the head of a government in an English-speaking world who was openly gay, would never have seemed possible.

But because of that generation, because of men like Ernest Côté, because of their sacrifices and their valour, nothing in this country or in this province is impossible to achieve. Through them, we enjoy unlimited potential and opportunity. All we have to add is hard work and sometimes a lucky break.

The same can be said of our friends in the press, who I'm proud are here today. The Christina Blizzards and the Martin Regg Cohns of the world are free to write their opinions, free to speak freely, free to criticize the government and, Lord knows, the opposition in recent days, because they have no fear of retribution, because of the Ernest Côtés of the world.

Ernest Côté and his fellow soldiers fought against a vile, oppressive and hateful regime to end and defeat the Holocaust. Today, Jewish Canadians—any Canadian—need not fear their government, because people like Monte Kwinter and Gila Martow prove they can be government. That is the legacy of Ernest Côté.

I say to this assembly—and it is an appeal—that when a Canadian veteran or a soldier passes, it is up to us to honour and embrace their legacy, for without them, the values, the ideals, the comforts that we cherish, yet sometimes take for granted, might not be available.

Some might disagree, but, I respectfully suggest, look at Ernest Côté's path. Look at those who have followed

him, who still continue to fight against religious and ethnic persecution in the world, who have sacrificed to ensure that little girls get to go to school in Afghanistan and that their moms get to vote, and who have been deployed to restore self-government and freedom of the press, as is happening elsewhere in the world. In that sense, Ernest Côté's legacy, at 101 years old, was especially profound. We, by the virtue of speaking freely in this assembly today, are part of that legacy.

Ernest Côté died in every Canadian's second hometown last week, in the city of Ottawa. A Canadian hero, he was mourned and is mourned by an entire nation. He was the last of the D-Day colonels. His service was marked with distinction. Until the very end, as we all know, he was gutsy.

Though he was recently in the news for an unjust, unlawful, and un-Canadian act against him, he shouldn't be remembered for that. Instead, he should be remembered for his resolution, for his contributions to Canada and our sovereign, and, above all, for his bravery.

One of Ernest's last interviews was the result of that heinous experience. Perhaps characteristically of him and his generation, he said, "I was never afraid. I was madder than a wasp. Wasps ain't afraid; they're mad."

Now, at least 70 years after Churchill's declaration, the boldness, the audacity and, frankly, the clarity in Ernest Côté's words still echo around this country as the clarion call for the brave and the courageous.

On behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, I wish to extend condolences and thanks to Ernest Côté's family. I want them to know that we shall remember him.

To Ernest Côté, I say, rest peacefully and God bless you.

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Timmins-James Bay.

I'm very honoured to rise on behalf of New Democrats to pay tribute to Ernest Côté, who passed away last Thursday at the age of 101. Like so many of Canada's veterans, Monsieur Côté believed in service, and his distinguished career will be remembered as one of service to Canada.

His service to our country began when he joined the Canadian army in 1939 as a lieutenant and member of the Royal 22nd Régiment. As a lieutenant colonel, Côté served as the logistics officer with the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, which landed on Juno Beach on June 6, 1944. On D-Day, Canadian Forces faced some of the stiffest resistance and yet made the furthest advances into France of any Allied units.

Monsieur Côté believed that "D-Day was the beginning in Europe that denied the forces of Nazism and fascism from spreading to take away the freedom of all of us."

Following the war, Côté went on to have a distinguished 30-year career in the public service. He served in external affairs, northern affairs and veterans affairs, among other posts. He participated in the first meetings of the United Nations General Assembly, where he was involved in drafting the charter for the World Health Organization, and he would serve as Canada's ambassador to Finland.

Despite a very successful career as a top civil servant, he is remembered by those who met him during those years for his kindness, for always being friendly and taking the time to stop and talk with staff. He retired from public service in 1975, but he continued to serve as an example. Monsieur Côté was always a fixture at Remembrance Day ceremonies and at the Canadian War Museum.

He believed very strongly that young people must appreciate the freedoms we enjoy. He believed that they must not be indifferent. "Young people today must know that freedom is very often under attack in non-military ways. Freedom of thought. Freedom of the press. The challenge to keep these freedoms is a very difficult exercise that young people must accept."

As a father of four—two girls and two boys—Monsieur Côté believed that everyone should be treated equally, and he ensured that his daughters would enjoy the same access to higher education as his sons would. His children remember him as being kind, loving, humble and private, with a deep love of his country.

All of us in this room and everyone who has the honour to serve the people of Ontario and of Canada would do well to reflect on the service of Ernest Côté, to remind ourselves what service to our country really means, to recommit ourselves to the highest standards of service, honour and integrity.

We may have lost a great Canadian, but we will remember him.

M. Gilles Bisson: Comme ma chef et d'autres ont dit, on reconnaît que M. Côté était un individu qui est né ici au Canada et qui n'avait jamais l'intention, quoi qu'il allait faire dans sa vie, d'être aussi important, non seulement après la guerre, mais durant la guerre.

Puis je pense que ça a été dit—et, je pense, bien dit, par ma collègue, M^{me} MacLeod—que quand ces hommes-là sont entrés dans l'armée entre 1939 et 1945, ils ne sont jamais entrés parce qu'ils voulaient être, eux-mêmes, les héros. Ils ne sont jamais entrés parce qu'ils pensaient que c'était eux-mêmes qui allaient mettre fin à la guerre. Ils l'ont fait pour une raison : pour être capable de servir leur nation.

M. Côté, comme le restant du 22^e et le restant de l'armée canadienne qui a fait le temps durant la guerre de 1939 à 1945 à différentes places en Europe, en Afrique et d'autres, a reconnu après la guerre que ce qu'ils ont fait était si important pour notre démocratie—une nation très nouvelle, une nation de peut-être 70 ans dans le temps et une nation qui a réalisé que la démocratie est quelque chose qu'il faut défendre, même si ça veut dire au coût de la vie. M. Côté était une de ces personnes-là qui ont

réalisé jusqu'à quel point ce qu'ils avaient fait durant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale était important.

Je veux dire qu'ici à l'Assemblée législative, la section ontarienne de l'association parlementaire francophone de l'Ontario va, le 22 avril de cette année, le recevoir dans l'Ordre de la Pléiade comme commandant. C'est l'honneur le plus haut qu'on peut donner comme assemblée parlementaire francophone et je suis très content que cette Assemblée a décidé de faire ça avant que M. Côté ne décède.

Et on dit à la famille de M. Côté : c'était votre père, c'était votre grand-père et quelqu'un qui va vous manquer grandement, mais sachez qu'il va aussi manquer à l'Ontario et au Canada, qui vont toujours se rappeler qui était Ernest Côté.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As part of the unanimous consent, we are all asked to stand for a moment of silence. Everyone in the House, please rise for a moment of silence in memory of Ernest Côté.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the tradition, I thank all members for their respectful, heartfelt and powerful statements. We will collect those in hard copy and make those available to the family of Ernest Côté.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Last Thursday, we learned that the Sudbury police services board had contacted the Ontario Civilian Police Commission to seek guidance.

Premier, we've asked the commission for an investigation into the alleged bribery. Shouldn't you be doing the same? Shouldn't you be asking the Ontario Civilian Police Commission to conduct an investigation into the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr.? Premier, why have you fallen silent on Mr. Lougheed's inappropriate behaviour and alleged bribery?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said many times in this House, there is an investigation ongoing. It is an investigation that's taking place outside of this House. I would say to the member opposite that the police services board is responsible for the provision of adequate and effective police services in their municipalities. Police services boards are not directed by me or by this House. So we need to let the police services board take action as it sees fit. We need to let the investigation unfold outside this Legislature, which is where it's appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: The Ontario Civilian Police Commission has said that all police services board members have an obligation to respect and uphold the law. Gerry Lougheed Jr. has not, apparently, lived up to his obligations as chair of the Sudbury police

services board—I think all of us can agree with that—so much so that his colleagues on the board are now distancing themselves from him. Unlike the Premier, they don't want to be dragged down with him when he falls.

Premier, by order in council, you have the power to revoke Mr. Lougheed's appointment. Why won't you remove him from the Sudbury police services board until the OPP investigations are complete?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Unlike the member opposite, I actually trust the system. I trust the people who are part of the police services board. I trust the people who are undertaking the investigation that is taking place outside of this House.

I would just go back to that initial comment. I think it's very important that we trust the people who have been put in positions and who have responsibilities that are not directed by the politics of what goes on in this House. Those investigations are happening outside. The police services board will make its decision based on its very good capacity to do so.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: Premier, the commission has said board members should act with the "highest levels of honesty and integrity." It should not take criminal charges or convictions to prove Mr. Lougheed Jr. fell below that standard; it simply takes listening to Mr. Olivier's recordings. So when will you demonstrate integrity and remove Mr. Lougheed Jr. from the board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci, monsieur le Président. Police services boards are responsible for the provision of adequate and effective police services in municipalities. Among their duties, police services boards generally determine objectives and priorities with respect to police services in their jurisdictions.

So, about the question that was raised by the Leader of the Opposition, I understand that the Sudbury police services board has discussed this matter and has contacted the Ontario Civilian Police Commission. They shared their findings, and the OCPC shared their findings and comments from the community. The OCPC is authorized, under section 25 of the Police Services Act, to investigate, inquire into and report on the conduct of a member of the police service board if requested.

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BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again, to the Premier: Premier, over and over again you have claimed the investigation into Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Pat Sorbara was independent and not taking place in this House, and you said it again today a couple of times. Yet, when asked about possible OPP charges against Pat Sorbara, on at least five occasions now you have said, "We don't expect it to happen."

Premier, why are you trying to influence the OPP investigation by saying that you don't think the OPP will lay charges?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will say again that I take this matter very seriously. The investigation is happening outside of this House and I have been clear that we need to let that investigation unfold.

I would say respectfully to the member opposite, the fact that he stands up and asks question after question suggests that he would like to investigate the matter in this House, Mr. Speaker. I think that's very inappropriate when he knows full well that the investigation is—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —happening independent of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier. Premier, when asked about former deputy education minister, Ben Levin, you said, "This is a case that is before the courts; I cannot comment on any of the aspects of the case." When asked about the OPP investigation into deleted gas plant documents, you said, "Unfortunately, I am not able to comment further."

Premier, why do you now feel that it is acceptable for you to comment on this particular OPP investigation into the bribery scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is beyond rich that the member opposite, and, quite frankly, both parties, want commentary on every single aspect of this matter. I have said over and over again that this investigation is happening outside of this House.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been clear. I made a statement two Fridays ago about my position. I said what I believed was the case, and I will stand by that. But the investigation is happening outside of this House, not in this Legislature during question period.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier. Premier, as the chief executive of this province, your words hold a lot of weight and your actions even more so. It's unethical for you to share your thoughts with law enforcement officials about how you expect their independent investigation to play out. When you said that you didn't expect charges against Pat Sorbara, you crossed the line.

So I ask you: Why did you feel it was appropriate to deviate from your standard "no comment" position and actually profess an opinion on whether charges will be laid against your deputy chief of staff? Why is this criminal investigation any different than any of the others?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the member opposite and his colleagues have asked questions over and over again to which they claim they want answers. I have done my utmost to say what I believe, to talk about my

position and to then say—and I will say this repeatedly—there is an investigation going on. It's happening outside of this House. It is not the business of this Legislature to undertake that investigation. It is happening independent of this Legislature. I think the member opposite knows that and yet he continues to ask questions that suggest that he's not respecting the fact that this investigation is happening outside the Legislature.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has been asked who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed their instructions. She won't answer—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Beaches–East York, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has been asked for any evidence of her version of the Sudbury bribery scandal. She doesn't have any.

It speaks volumes that the Premier keeps ducking these questions. Does she have anything to back up her story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have said repeatedly that I take this very seriously. I made a statement two Fridays ago that is in the public realm. I've been very, very clear that I will continue to co-operate fully with the authorities, as will Pat Sorbara, and that that investigation is happening outside of this Legislature, not here in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier's newest MPP was asked what he thought about the Olivier calls from Sorbara and Lougheed. He said those calls were "a negotiation." Federal prosecutors say, "It is a crime to negotiate in any way about an appointment to any public office or government job."

Gerry Lougheed thought he was negotiating to get Andrew Olivier out of the way. Pat Sorbara was negotiating. Even the Premier's candidate called this a negotiation. Whose version is correct, the Premier's or her member for Sudbury's?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we are not holding the investigation in this Legislature.

I just want to say again how pleased I am that Glenn Thibeault is our member for Sudbury. He, like all of us—when we're asked a question, we attempt to answer it. But on this, the fact is that the investigation that both the interim Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party want so desperately to happen inside this Legislature actually is happening independent of the Legislature, outside of this House, where it belongs.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let's review. The Premier said that the appointment was a done deal, but Andrew Olivier told police investigators that Glenn Thibeault was still holding out hope that he would be nominated. He

told Olivier that he was not looking to take the appointment.

So I go back to the same question, again to the Premier: Whose version is correct, the Premier's version or the member for Sudbury's version?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I think it's very important that we put our trust in the authorities to ask the questions of all of the people they choose to ask questions of, and to conduct the investigation outside of this Legislature. It's not for this House to do that. It's not for this House to determine what the questions would be and who would ask them.

We're going to let the investigation—which is independent—unfold outside of this House.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Gerry Lougheed says that the Premier didn't want to make an appointment because she wanted a nomination process. When did the Premier decide to offer Andrew Olivier a position so that the Premier's chosen candidate could have an uncontested nomination?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party is going to try to come at this many, many different ways. She knows full well that I made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate in Sudbury because I truly believed, and I continue to believe, that Glenn Thibeault is a very strong voice for Sudbury, and that it's a very good thing that he's here sitting in our Legislature.

He believes that the plan we are implementing—the plan to invest in people, to invest in their talents and skills, to invest in infrastructure, to make sure that people have security in their retirement—is important work, that that is the work we need to be doing: to have a poverty reduction strategy; to make sure that we do everything we can to help people in this province and to build the province up. That's why Glenn Thibeault ran for us. That's why he's here, and we're very, very happy that he is with us on this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Who told Gerry Lougheed and who told Pat Sorbara to offer Andrew Olivier a job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There is an investigation happening outside of this House. That's where it belongs. It's independent. The Public Prosecution Service of Canada has been retained. It is an independent process, and we are going to let that process unfold outside of the Legislature.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, apparently Gerry Lougheed did not know there would be no nomination. Pat Sorbara apparently did not know there would be no nomination. Andrew Olivier apparently did not know there would be no nomination. So who did the Premier tell, other than her soul, that there would be no nomination?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again, I've made it clear that I had made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate in Sudbury. He's a fine, fine voice for the people of Sudbury, and we're very glad to have him here.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The investigation that is taking place is taking place outside of this House. Whatever the leader of the third party desires, it's taking place outside of this House.

1110

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you've said, "I will fully co-operate with the authorities." You've said you will continue to work with the authorities. Working and co-operating with the authorities shouldn't include publicly stating your expected outcome of the case. I thought you always said it was not appropriate to comment on open cases. Premier, aside from your public statements, have you and your lawyers talked to the OPP regarding the alleged bribery case?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I was very, very upfront and open. Two Fridays ago, I made a statement about my position. I said that the investigation was going to take place, it would take place outside of the Legislature and that we would co-operate with all of the authorities. That remains my position.

But did I have a position? Absolutely. My position was that Glenn Thibeault would be the best candidate for the Liberals in Sudbury.

I think the people of Sudbury have spoken. They made a decision. We're very happy to have Glenn Thibeault with us here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: Premier, you have said that the duties of the deputy chief of staff in your office are separate from the ongoing investigation. I would say that the investigation is actually in your office, because both you and Ms. Sorbara have been asked to sit down with OPP investigators. Premier, have either of those interviews taken place, and did they take place at Queen's Park?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very clear that I and my staff will co-operate fully with the authorities. That is what we will continue to do, Mr. Speaker.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has insisted for some weeks now that she decided last November to appoint her candidate for the Sudbury by-election. For weeks now, New Democrats have asked over and over for evidence to back up her claim.

Now, section 11.8 of the Ontario Liberal Party constitution says that the Liberal leader can appoint a candidate

over any objection. But it goes on to say, "The leader shall communicate his or her intention to make such appointment as soon as possible, and in writing, to the nomination commissioner and to the president of the constituency association."

Can the Premier provide this House with a copy of the letter she sent to both the nomination commissioner of her party and the president of the Sudbury riding association?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, there is an investigation that is going on outside of this House. The member for Timmins-James Bay is not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member for Timmins-James Bay, to the best of my knowledge, is not part of that investigative process. It is independent of this House, and it will take place outside of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The public has a right to the evidence, as this assembly does. My question is—Bill Nurmi, the head of the local riding association, told the Sudbury Star that it wasn't until Monday, December 15, that he learned the Liberal plan to appoint your choice candidate. So, clearly, he had not received a letter from you until sometime after December 15.

When did the Premier send Bill Nurmi, then president of the Sudbury riding association, a letter advising him of your decision to appoint your hand-picked candidate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think this may be the first time that the Liberal Party constitution has formed the foundation of a question from the NDP. We, in the Liberal Party, have annual general meetings where we debate constitutional changes. The members of the Ontario Liberal Party have decided that the leader ought to have the power to appoint, unlike in the NDP.

I think the experience in Scarborough-Guildwood demonstrated that sometimes the right thing to do for everyone is to be clear about who you want your candidate to be, to appoint that candidate, rather than go through a sham process, as existed in Scarborough-Guildwood.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Education. As a former public health nurse, and as a public school trustee in the city of Toronto, I know the importance of delivering an evidence-based health and physical education curriculum.

Minister, last week you released an updated health and physical education curriculum. The one reason for developing this new curriculum is to keep our children healthy and safe. It is the most consulted piece of curriculum in Ontario history, yet there are some who continue to make false claims about the curriculum and what it entails. Last week, the Conservative member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Ms. Gallant, brought the

debate to a new low. She stated in the House of Commons that the new curriculum was grooming children for exploitation and was written with intent to harm children.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please explain to the House how the updated health and physical education curriculum will keep our children healthy and safe?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for the question.

First off, the statements made by Cheryl Gallant, the Conservative Ontario MP, are false and misleading, and should be condemned by every member of this House. The health and phys-ed curriculum is dangerously out of date and needed to be updated. It is the most consulted piece of curriculum in Ontario history.

The federal Conservatives' irresponsible comments should be especially condemned by the official opposition, who are in complete disarray over their position on Ontario's updated curriculum. As I said last week, the PC education critic says one thing, and we have all three leadership candidates saying the opposite thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister, for the response. As a former public health nurse in the former city of Toronto, I've seen first-hand the importance of delivering a current and relevant health and physical education curriculum. Having taught the course, called Changing Me, for a number of years, I heard many diverse sexuality questions from children as young as grade 3.

There has been a lot of misinformation out there about the new, revised health and physical education curriculum. Again, Ms. Gallant, MP, said, "If withdrawal of this Liberal policy can prevent one child from being groomed for exploitation, it really must be withdrawn."

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she please explain to the House how the updated curriculum is one of the most consulted curriculums in the history of Ontario education?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the member for her advocacy on behalf of students who need accurate, up-to-date information.

This is the most consulted curriculum in Ontario history. Consultations involved parents, teachers, medical and health professionals, and students themselves. We consulted with parents in every corner of the province. Approximately 4,000 parents were given an opportunity to provide their input. A parent in every elementary school across Ontario and from all four publicly funded school boards was provided with an opportunity to provide input.

Our government's top priority is the health and safety of our children, and we heard from parents, teachers, students and organizations that there is a need for an updated curriculum which provides accurate information. Parents understand this, and it's why Cheryl Gallant's statements—statements that, frankly, I think are disgusting—

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: —should be condemned by—

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

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, last week we learned that Gerry Lougheed has raised over \$100,000—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm doing it. Come to order.

Member, continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Gerry Lougheed has raised over \$100,000 for Justin Trudeau and your federal cousins. Now, since this Sudbury bribery scandal broke, the federal Liberals have cut him loose, but they're keeping the money. It is clear that Liberals will take money no matter who raises it.

Premier, will you tell us how much money Gerry Lougheed has raised for the provincial Liberals, and if you have any intent of returning any of that ill-gotten gain?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, hope sprang eternal. I thought that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was going to stand up and distance himself from the comments of his federal riding-mate. He just sprang up out of his seat, and I thought that's what was going to happen—which would have been a laudable thing for him to do, because the comments of his federal counterpart were truly beneath the dignity of a member of the House of Commons.

1120

Again, I will say that the matter that the member is referencing is part of an investigation that's happening outside of this House. We're going to let that investigation unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, perhaps you are so adamantly defending Gerry Lougheed because he's worth more to you driving the bus than being put under it.

Premier, if you refuse to give numbers about how much Gerry Lougheed has poured into your party coffers, perhaps you can answer this: Don't your actions of defending a Liberal bagman under criminal investigation clearly show that your party and you, as a leader, are willing to put their own economic self-interests ahead of the people of Ontario and, in fact, the rule of law?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. He knows that if he wants to get information about money that is raised, that information is disclosed publicly, as it is for all of the parties. He can look at that information largely because of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —we brought in about transparency and the disclosure of information. As far as—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to close, Mr. Speaker, I will say there is an investigation going on. We will cooperate with the authorities. It's happening outside of this House.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. In 2013, Paul Godfrey, a well-known PC and provincially appointed chair of the OLG, had different ideas on the future of the Ontario gaming industry than Premier Wynne. So, on May 16, 2013, the Premier decided to get rid of him and sign an order in council that effectively unappointed Paul Godfrey two years before his contract ended. But Gerry Lougheed Jr., a long-time Liberal and subject of police investigations, is still a provincially appointed member of the Sudbury police board.

Will the Premier stop protecting her friends and sign an order in council to take Gerry Lougheed off the Sudbury police services board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just for a brief moment, I thought maybe the question was going in a different direction and it was going to be a question about something else, Mr. Speaker.

However, I will say again that the police services boards in this province are responsible in their municipalities for the provision of adequate and effective police services. They operate in their municipalities and they operate very well. I have a lot of faith in the police services boards in the province—as I have faith in the authorities that are undertaking the investigation outside of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Gerry Lougheed is facing not one, but two police investigations for offering Andrew Olivier a job on behalf of the Premier, to get the nominated candidate out of the way, yet he is still on the Sudbury police services board.

We all know the Premier has the power to remove him. She's done so in the past. Will the Premier do the right thing and remove Gerry Lougheed from the Sudbury police services board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Speaker, I understand that the Sudbury police services board addressed this issue recently and voted for Monsieur Lougheed to retain his position. Also, I understand that the Sudbury police services board has discussed this matter and has contacted the Ontario Civilian Police Commission. They shared their findings and comments from the community mem-

bers, and the OCPC is proceeding. So let's let this process unfold.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. My constituents in Cambridge and North Dumfries are well aware of the vital role of Ontario's aerospace sector and what it does to our larger economy. Indeed, many of us are employed in these highly skilled jobs. In fact, chances are that if you're taking off or landing in a plane in Ontario, at least part of that plane's landing gear was manufactured in my community of Cambridge.

I'm proud to be a part of a government that's making targeted, strategic investments that are strengthening key Ontario industries, like investments in our aerospace industry. Last week, the minister and I were in Cambridge, making an announcement in partnership with Héroux-Devtek, an emerging aerospace manufacturer with new, state-of-the-art facilities in Cambridge. Would the minister please inform the House about our government's partnership with Héroux-Devtek?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to commend the member not just for her question but for the great job she did at that announcement. She really has done a fantastic job in that community.

The news we were able to announce was great news for Cambridge and great news for Ontario's aerospace sector. Héroux-Devtek will be investing \$54 million in a brand new, state-of-the-art aerospace landing-gear facility right in Cambridge. That is 40 new jobs, 50 existing jobs that are going to be supported directly by that, helping to strengthen the 250 core people.

This is what Gilles Labbé, CEO of Héroux-Devtek, had to say when asked, "Why Cambridge?" Because of (1) the most talented workforce anywhere in North America and (2), the strong partnership with the province of Ontario that helped us beat out Quebec and helped us beat out potential American locations. We won this contract working as a team, and we're really proud—

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

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to thank the minister for not only his response but for coming to Cambridge to announce this important project in my community. I truly enjoyed my time and tour at Héroux-Devtek last week.

This announcement is part of the larger positive economic trend in my region. To remind the House, the Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo region's unemployment rate is 5.7%, well below the national average of 6.6%. In the past year, we have seen the unemployment rate in my region decrease by 0.9%. We've also seen 2,800 new jobs come to the Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo region in the past year alone. I'm encouraged that Héroux-Devtek is part of Cambridge's economic momentum.

Would the minister please update the House on the status of the aerospace industry in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I am very pleased to do that, because the aerospace sector really is one of the fastest-growing sectors anywhere in North America. Ontario really has become very competitive globally when it comes to aerospace. The Ontario-Montreal aerospace corridor has become very globally significant.

In fact, our aerospace industry revenues were \$5.3 billion in 2013. That's an impact on our GDP of \$3 billion. That's very significant. It employs close to 17,000 Ontarians, and it's a great exporter. It exports 80% of its finished products. Ontario is home to 14 of the top 25 global aerospace companies.

Something that really excites me, too, is that we're investing in our talent. We've just recently partnered with Centennial College, where we're putting forward a great partnership that's producing even better state-of-the-art, competitive, next-generation workers, something we're very proud of.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last week you chose to deflect question after question on your involvement in offering jobs to get your own candidate to step aside in the Sudbury by-election.

You keep saying your office has been exonerated, but that's not what the Chief Electoral Officer said. He said, "I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act..."

Why do you keep insisting your office has been exonerated when the trial hasn't started yet?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite is not reflecting what I have said. What I said, and I've said it repeatedly, is that Elections Ontario determined that the allegations against me and the member for Sudbury were baseless. I've said that over and over again.

Then I went on to quote from the Chief Electoral Officer, who said clearly, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges." That is what the Chief Electoral Officer has said.

The Chief Electoral Officer has now passed on the process to the next phase. We need to let that investigation unfold outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
1130

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Premier: Now the police are examining these apparent contraventions to the Election Act, but you seem to be trying to influence their investigation. It would be naive to suggest your comments in the media have no effect on the investigation. Why won't you simply let the Ontario Provincial Police conduct their investigation, free of interference?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's exactly what I've been saying over and over again. We want the authorities to do their investigation outside of this Legislature.

Quite frankly, were I to answer in this House every question, in detail, that had been posed to me by the opposition parties, then that would be inappropriate. That's why I've said that the investigation is happening outside of this House. We need to let the authorities do their work.

LIBERAL PARTY STAFF

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. We all know Rob Ford's former chief of staff has experience slashing budgets and cutting services, but he also knows a thing or two about politicians under police investigation.

Did the Premier hire the new director of the Liberal Party for his experience cutting budgets and slashing services, or his experience with Project Traveller and Project Brazen 2?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't see the way in which that is a question of government policy. But let me just say I also think that it is really beneath the dignity of members in this House to cast aspersions on staff members who are simply trying to do their work.

The staff member that the member opposite is referencing has worked with the Liberal Party for many, many years. He's a man who I respect very much, and he has experience that will benefit the Liberal Party of Ontario. We're very glad to have Earl Provost on board.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Rob Ford cut transit, he cut libraries, he cut environmental programs, he cut parks and he cut social services—oh, and the police were investigating him too. Earl Provost helped steer the mayor through all of that.

Did the Premier hire Rob Ford's chief of staff to help her slash services in Ontario or to help her with the four OPP anti-rackets investigations into the Liberal government of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows full well that her party ran on a platform that would have cut \$600 million more than was any part of our fiscal plan.

Again, I say to the member opposite that in the same way the member opposite and her party determine who their staff are going to be—whether it's Jonah Schein or Paul Ferreira, people who have been past candidates—we determine on this side when we think there are people who really share our values system and who understand the organization of the party. We believe Earl Provost is going to be a very strong asset to the party.

ELDER ABUSE

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Ma question s'adresse au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées. Minister, Ontario is home to almost two million people over the age of 65, and by 2036, that number is projected to more than double. In my riding of Burlington, nearly one in five citizens is a senior, and issues related to their

safety and well-being are ones of common interest and concern.

As the number of seniors in our society grows, the number of seniors reporting incidents of abuse is also at risk of increasing. In fact, research has found that between 4% and 10% of seniors may experience some form of abuse from someone in a position of authority or trust at some point in their later years.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to commend the minister for his continued work in fighting for the safety and dignity of older adults in our province. Would the minister please inform this Legislature of the steps our government is taking in order to ensure that seniors in our province are safe and protected?

L'hon. Mario Sergio: Merci beaucoup pour une très bonne question, parfaite pour aujourd'hui.

Interjection.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Oui, certainement.

Speaker, I'm very proud indeed that we were the first government in Canada to introduce a strategy to combat elder abuse, establishing a zero-tolerance policy as well. Since 2003, we invested more than \$9 million in elder abuse prevention and awareness programs.

I have to say as well that as the result of the 2010 retirement homes authority, retirement homes are now required to take a number of unprecedented steps to protect our seniors. They must, among many other things, obtain a licence and post the seniors' bill of rights.

Elder abuse is not acceptable, it's not condoned, it's not tolerated and it must stop—

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

Hon. Mario Sergio: —our government and it's our goal—

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

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to thank the minister for his response. It's great to hear how committed our government is to supporting our growing seniors' population, especially when it comes to their safety. That is why I'm pleased to hear of all the initiatives our government is taking towards ensuring the safety and well-being of my senior constituents.

In a recent visit to my riding, the minister had the opportunity to visit our dynamic seniors' centre and meet with seniors in our community in addition to those working to ensure their well-being. Last year, I was pleased to host a round table on seniors' issues that included caregivers and members of our law enforcement community.

One of the great initiatives that's being developed and is in fact now developed is the OPP's province-wide seniors' Crime Stoppers initiative, an interactive and bilingual DVD for presentations to seniors on topics such as fraud, elder abuse and neglect. This is now utilized by local Crime Stoppers programs across our province.

Minister, could you please expand on the ways in which we are continuing to safeguard Ontario seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Merci pour votre question. Indeed, the member is very passionate speaking on behalf of our seniors.

We are working tirelessly and passionately to create a secure and supportive environment for seniors. We know that it is only through education, training, collaboration and coordination of services that we will make this goal a reality.

Our elder abuse strategy has three particular parts: coordination of community services, training of front-line staff and workers, and public education to raise awareness.

Our own Ontario Provincial Police has a mandatory training program on elder abuse for some 50 to 100 of its forces. We also provide some \$50,000 to the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly to gather more data.

Let me say that we, as a government in Ontario, care for our seniors and strive to provide the best living environment—

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

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. I have received a number of phone calls and emails from my constituents who are fed up with your government scandals. They are outraged by your government's actions during the Sudbury by-election and have asked that you and your party be held accountable for what happened.

Premier, how do you expect any of us to trust you when you've made it clear that no one will be held accountable for what happened in Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said repeatedly, there is an investigation going on. The authorities are doing what they need to do to complete an investigation. In fact, that's a process that I hope the member opposite would point his constituents to, to make sure they understand that there is an investigation going on, that it's not happening in this House, but it's happening with people who actually have the responsibility for that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, I do point that out to my constituents. I tell them there are four investigations going on, not just one.

This government is now under its fourth OPP investigation. There is no excuse for that, though they've certainly tried every one in the book. It's time for the Premier to stop putting political gain ahead of doing what's right.

Premier, will you take the first step in rebuilding the trust you've lost and demand that those who are responsible for this mess step down from their public duties?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been clear that we will co-operate with the authorities. The investigation is taking place outside of this House. I made a public statement two Fridays ago. I made it clear that Pat Sorbara, if there are charges, will step aside. The police services board is an independent body and the authorities are undertaking an investigation outside of this Legislature.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Just in from the TSN TradeCentre: Premier, in light of the all the draft picks being traded in the NHL today, can you confirm that Andrew Olivier was given one job offer and future considerations in exchange for the Liberal nomination in Sudbury?

1140

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It was at least an interesting preamble.

Again, I have said repeatedly that there's an investigation happening. It's happening outside of this House, not in the Legislature. We're going to let the authorities do their work, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Premier, when was the decision made to offer a job to Andrew Olivier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, there is an investigation happening. It's happening outside of this House. I have been clear that we will work with the authorities. I made a statement two Fridays ago. We're going to let that investigation unfold.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board.

Minister, youth unemployment has been a challenge in our province over the past few years, and I know this is an issue that concerns the constituents in my riding of Kitchener Centre. I thank you very much for visiting my riding last Friday, where you spent many hours listening to stakeholders who shared their concerns with you.

Making sure that graduates and young professionals have the tools that they need to succeed is very important. It ensures a strong workforce and a strong economy.

I recall last year that the Ontario public service was chosen as one of Canada's Top Employers for Young People, and that's for the second year in a row. We know that the OPS has a strong record of supporting the professional development of young Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain to this House the ways in which the OPS has made youth employment a priority?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre for the question and also for hosting me at a very interesting day of meeting with stakeholders on Friday.

The Ontario public service does indeed have a strong record in providing employment programs to students, recent graduates, at-risk youth and internationally trained young professionals across the province. Ontario's employment programs for youth and new professionals promote the OPS as an employer of first choice and help to revitalize the aging workforce.

In 2013-14, the OPS provided close to 6,000 paid employment experiences for youth and new professionals, including 5,200 positions for summer students in minis-

tries and community agencies. These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to youth employment and training the next generation for important responsibilities in government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thanks to the minister for her answer.

I did hear a comment from the other side of the House about where the meetings took place. Three of our meetings that day were in Kitchener Centre, for the record.

I know that families in my riding and across the province, for that matter, do appreciate the opportunities being made available to young people by the Ontario public service. We've all heard time and again about the challenges that young people face while they're looking for a good summer job, and then after graduation what it's like trying to find meaningful employment, so I'm pleased to hear that the OPS offers so many opportunities for young people to develop their professional skills and to build their resumés.

Minister, can you please give this House and my constituents in Kitchener Centre more insights on the employment programs that the Ontario public service offers to young people?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to speak about some of these programs, and I'm sure members on all sides of the House will want to know about this to support their constituents.

The Ontario Internship Program hires recent graduates into occupational areas in which current and future skill shortages have been identified.

Newcomers to Canada have an opportunity to gain Canadian work experience through the paid OPS internship program for internationally trained individuals and the OPS internship program for internationally trained engineers.

The OPS learn and work program continues to provide work experience for up to 140 at-risk youth per year in priority communities across Ontario. Through that program, high school students are able to earn credits toward their diploma.

For young people across the province, employment experience programs help ensure they develop the skills they need to lead to successful careers.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier.

Premier, your deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, used the following quote in her online biography: "Never retreat, never explain, never apologize—get the thing done and let them howl."

Unfortunately, she's taken that a step too far in the Sudbury by-election. In fact, it reflects her lack of political ethics. Now she's under OPP investigation for bribery.

Premier, will you continue to let Pat Sorbara never explain, never apologize and continue to retreat instead

of demanding her to step down during this criminal investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the member opposite understands that that quote is from Nellie McClung, who, quite frankly, is a role model for all women who have worked to get into positions of influence that have traditionally been positions held by men. I think that we can all respect the heritage of someone like Nellie McClung. She worked so hard and she didn't back down. She fought for her place in the politics of this country and this province. I have a great respect for the work that Nellie McClung did.

Pat Sorbara is a woman who understands that the history of our democracy includes not respecting the position of women, and that's something we need to fight for and continue to fight for.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I would ask some members to have their dialogues while question-and-answer period is going on—just to carry it somewhere else.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Premier: I always respect the role of women in politics at every level, but what I can't respect is the legacy that Pat Sorbara is casting upon your entire government. In fact, I find Sorbara's online bravado absolutely outrageous because she's just taking it too far.

Currently, your sorry government is under OPP investigation, as we know, for four separate incidents. You definitely have made history, Premier, sadly, as one of the most criminally investigated governments in Ontario. There's really only one way to go from here. Redeem yourself. Take the high road. Walk the path that Nellie McClung has developed and led on. Integrity is long overdue from your leadership.

Will you be a Premier and tell Sorbara to resign today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will continue to work in the best interests of the people of this province. The work that we're doing, Mr. Speaker, whether it's the job opportunities that are being provided for young people—our Minister of Children and Youth Services commented that her very first summer job was a government of Ontario job. That's extremely important work. There are young people today who are thinking about what they are going to do in the summer, and those summer jobs will start to inform their career paths and their lives going forward. That's extremely important work. Those investments are critical.

In fact, we're developing new programs. The youth employment fund that we put in place has helped 30,000 young people to find placement in a job. That has, in 80% of the cases, led to a permanent job. That work is critical. That's why we're in government, Mr. Speaker. That's the plan that we're implementing, and I hope the member opposite can work with us on those very—

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

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Earlier, New Democrats asked you the question: When did you send the letter as per your constitution both to your nomination commissioner and to Bill Nurmi, the president of the riding association? It's clear from the public record that the riding association president didn't find out—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —about the appointment until after December 15. I ask you again, when did you send the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, third time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —letter to the nomination commissioner or to the president of the riding association that you would be not following a nomination process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My colleagues and I welcome the member opposite to come and join our party and be part of our AGM and vote on our policies; likewise, if he'd like to bring the NDP constitution, because we'd be happy to give them some advice on running real nominations as opposed to sham nominations.

The fact is there is an investigation going on about a specific situation in Sudbury. We're going to let that investigation unfold. We're not going to do that in this House. It's an independent process. We're going to leave it as an independent process.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again to the Premier: You refuse to answer the question. The question is a very simple one. According to your constitution, the leader of the party has to send a letter at some time to both the riding association president and the nomination commissioner of the Liberal Party.

I ask you again: When did you send that letter and when will you make it public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My colleagues are talking about Adam Giambone and what kind of letters he got, and the candidate who was there. I don't have the answers to those questions.

But what I know is that there is an investigation going on into the matter in Sudbury. That investigation is independent. It's happening outside of this House. We will co-operate with the authorities, but we need to let that investigation happen outside of this House.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I thought I would try something a little different here. My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Speaker, it's hard to think of the province of Ontario without our Great Lakes. We use them for drinking water. We use them for food. We use them for electricity, for transportation, for recreation. In fact, including my home city of Mississauga and, of course, our sister city of Brampton, some 80% of Ontarians get their drinking water from the Great Lakes.

Everyone has got memories of being out on the Great Lakes, enjoying sailing in the summer, fishing all-around—and they're not the only ones. The Great Lakes are a commercial entity as well. Our Great Lakes fisheries are worth some \$200 million annually. As a whole, Ontario's Great Lakes basin contains 40% of Canada's economic activity.

Now, Minister, studies have been showing that population growth, chemicals, invasive species and so on are changing the Great Lakes. Would the minister please inform the House on the actions that our government has taken to protect the Great Lakes?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is one of the matters that Ontarians actually do care about and want to hear questions about in this House.

I was just talking with my friend from Mississauga—Streetsville and my friend from Ottawa—Orléans, because we're getting a lot of letters from young kids about microbeads, about invasive species, pharmaceuticals. Ontarians are very concerned about the future of one of our most visible and important resources and really want the government to act and I think want the opposition to hold the government accountable for acting on this, which is why we have presented this very, very important piece of legislation that will enable communities, First Nations, farmers, businesses, environmental and labour groups to come together to protect our Great Lakes and to establish plans that can be implemented locally.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, Minister, you make a good point on how important the Great Lakes are to our ecosystem, to our economy and to our well-being as Ontarians. Protecting those Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin is going to enhance the quality of life for all Ontario families and, more importantly, ensure a dynamic, green economy for future generations.

Now, Minister, this is the third time Ontario has introduced a proposed Great Lakes Protection Act in this Legislature. All members on all sides will recognize the importance of strong action to support the Great Lakes, which keep our economy competitive, and they're so important to each and every one of us.

This House, all of us, would like to know how the proposed Great Lakes act has been strengthened from previous versions. Minister, would you please talk to the House about how the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act will keep our Great Lakes strong and vibrant now and for future generations?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This bill has been around for a long time; one could call it the Jurassic Park of legislation. I know the member for Mississauga—Streetsville

knows the Great Lakes have been around for more than 6,000 years.

It's always important when you're talking about the Great Lakes and pollution that we actually understand the importance of science in these particular kinds of things because the government actually has over 221 projects in local communities, in all parties' constituencies, that are leading in best practices in cleaning up our lakes and creating economic opportunities from them.

We have committed to \$50 million a year, and I hope all members of the Legislature will vote for this bill once this bill moves forward. The guardians' steward council will then have access to funds, as will all members. I would encourage every member to talk to your local communities to take advantage of this government initiative, because that's where the best solutions come from.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is back to the Premier. Premier, earlier in question period today, I asked you two very simple questions. You talked about participating and co-operating with the authorities. I would like to know, and I think Ontarians would like to know, have you or your lawyers met with the OPP? When did you meet with them, and did you meet with them here at Queen's Park?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think what is important is that the people of Ontario know that there is an investigation going on, that it's happening outside of this House and that I and my staff will co-operate fully with the authorities. I think that's very, very important. I have said that over and over again. I said it publicly in my statement two Fridays ago, and I will continue to say it in this House in answer to questions. There is an investigation going on. It is not happening in this House. I will, and my staff will, co-operate fully with the authorities. We need to let that investigation unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, Premier, again, I was at your press conference a couple of Fridays ago. Clearly, you inserted yourself into the investigation with your comments. It's a very simple question, Premier: Have you met with the OPP—yes or no? Did you meet with them here—yes or no? It's a simple question. Answer the question.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that on the one hand, the member opposite seems to think that it was inappropriate for me to make a statement publicly, and, on the other hand, the member opposite wants me to answer more questions and he wants me to answer questions of detail about the investigation. I'm not going to do that.

The fact is, there is an investigation going on. We will co-operate fully with the authorities. That investigation is not happening in question period. It's not happening in this Legislature. It's happening outside the House, and we will let it unfold as it should.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: In my answer to the leader of the official opposition, I said the OCPC shared their findings and comments. It's the Sudbury police services board that shared their comments. I want to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That's a point of order. People are allowed to correct their record.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: In my question, I mentioned the nominated candidate. I meant to say the previously nominated candidate, Andrew Olivier.

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

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

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

ESTIMATES

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the year ending March 31, 2015, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Toronto, February 27, 2015.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I'm pleased to welcome Steve McHugh, Bert Pavese, Dave Elines, Bob Lapchuk, Ian Pearson, Ken Houghton, John Beechey, Alfred Mungra, Gerry Ireland, Kevin Murty, Ken McLean, Robin Saini and Mark Garcia. These are all Steelworkers on strike at Crown Holdings. Mr. Elines and Mr. Pavese found little Elijah Marsh when they and all the strikers joined the search over a week ago. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHNEIDERS

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I stand to recognize the enduring legacy left by the dedicated employees who, after 90 years of providing high-quality cold cuts from Kitchener's Courtland Avenue, have marked the end of an era. I speak, of course, of Kitchener's landmark Schneiders meat plant, an icon as recognizable as the smiling Dutch girl's face that looks out toward the 401 near Guelph.

When the last pack of baloney rolled off the line Thursday, it marked the final chapter of a century-long

success story born in the kitchen of John Metz Schneider's home. After building a door-to-door reputation for high-quality meats, J.M. Schneider opened the Courtland Avenue plant in 1925 to become one of Kitchener-Waterloo's biggest and best employers.

More than just a famous brand, the Schneiders meat plant was a way of life where loyalty and hard work were rewarded with good-paying, secure jobs. Workers and employers were a tight-knit family that worked and played and grew together. While the Dutch girl continues to smile, there are tears as we recognize all that has been lost with the Schneiders closure: the teams, the picnics, the up to 1,800 employees heading to work in the plant daily to produce a first-class product enjoyed right across Canada for close to a century.

The memories and legacy do remain, Speaker—a legacy not only preserved at the Waterloo Region Museum, but also in the hearts of those who worked at the Courtland Avenue plant with both honour and pride over the last 90 years.

To all those in the extended Schneiders family, we thank them.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I stand today once again to voice the concerns of my constituents around the health curriculum in our schools. When it comes to proper consultation, it's clear the Liberal government has not learned from previous mistakes. The lack of inclusive consultation before announcing the curriculum was disrespectful to parents in my constituency and a mistake on the Liberal government's part.

Now that the details of the curriculum have been released, the government has an obligation to continue the consultation process, not to end it. Ontario is a diverse province, and we must respect the diversity of beliefs when it comes to educating our children. Many people agree that health education is important, but my constituents have sought clarification about the age appropriateness of some materials. My constituents deserve to have their voices heard, and the government has a responsibility to address their concerns.

I've raised this issue four times now with the government. There need to be ongoing consultations where clarification can be sought and answers provided. I urge the government to sit down with parents and allow an open dialogue before implementing changes to the curriculum in September.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Arthur Potts: On Saturday morning at 3 a.m., a tragic shooting took place in my riding of Beaches–East York. The investigation is ongoing, but we do know that two young men were killed at the McDonalds on the Danforth, just east of Coxwell, and that, according to the lawyer for the shooter, the guard involved was licensed to carry the firearm.

I extend my condolences to the families of the deceased, and I acknowledge the trauma endured by the workers and patrons who witnessed this violent episode.

This shooting is an aberration in a community that is safe and vibrant.

Speaker, I often go to that McDonalds for my morning coffee as I head to the constituency office. My first campaign event was there the day the writ was dropped for last June's election. My partner Lisa's business is only a few minutes away, and her employees are regular patrons.

We have great BIAs in the neighbourhood, such as the Danforth Mosaic, the Danforth Village association and the Danforth East Community Association. They build up the Danforth and help create a family-friendly, vibrant destination for local residents and visitors.

Fantastic new eateries in the area, such as East of York, Melanie's Bistro and Local 1794—these are cropping up along the east Danforth.

In a few short months, East Lynn Park Farmers' Market will be offering delicious fresh produce, cheeses and, of course, VQA wines.

Mr. Speaker, what happened on Saturday morning was tragic but is not a reflection of our great community.

I am proud to represent a safe and flourishing part of Toronto and to support the scores of people who are working to keep it that way.

I ask you all to come to our community and visit the great shops, bars and restaurants that make the Danforth one of the most attractive places in Toronto to live and to play.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, last week I was pleased to attend the ROMA/OGRA annual conference. The conference showed what we've always known: that small and rural municipalities are outstanding advocates for the people they serve.

That's certainly true of the municipalities that I represent. They effectively presented our concerns in meetings I attended with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, and the interim leader of the official opposition.

I would like to thank our municipal leaders for asking me to attend these meetings. I appreciated the opportunity to support them, and I will be following up this week with letters to the ministers we met with.

Their concerns were wide-ranging and included: cuts to infrastructure programs; municipal reporting requirements; the need to reduce red tape; property taxes; and long-term care in our area.

Over and over, municipalities have said the government is not giving them a fair shake on infrastructure funding. Small and rural municipalities, especially those that are responsible and well run, are bearing the brunt of mismanagement at the provincial level. It shows up in this government's cancellation of Connecting Links. It shows up in an OMPF formula that penalizes too many

municipalities. It's no wonder that we in Perth–Wellington are feeling squeezed at every turn.

I urge the government to reflect on the feedback it received at ROMA. I urge them to act on the recommendations we heard.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The workers at Crown Holdings have been on strike for 20 months. They've been on the picket line in the bitter cold through last winter and through this winter.

Crown is one of the largest beverage can makers in the world, and this plant is a highly profitable, highly productive plant. Yet, Crown took a bargaining position of rolling back contract conditions and permanently ensuring that all new hires would be paid at a much lower rate than the existing workers. Crown wants to make sure that younger workers would permanently have a lower standard of living. Speaker, Crown wants to break these workers. Crown wants to end the kind of society where working people can live lives of decency and respect.

The Premier, for her part, stands aside and has ignored 1,200 letters from the workers and their supporters—no response at all.

Speaker, these workers deserve our support. They deserve support from the Premier. Crown may want to break these workers. The Premier may want to ignore them. They will not be ignored, and they will not be broken. It is up to all of us to support them, to support their boycott of Crown products and to support their call for provincial action.

COMMUNITY PANCAKE BREAKFAST

DÉJEUNER COMMUNAUTAIRE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: This past Family Day, I was proud to host my first annual Family Day pancake breakfast.

Continuing on the tradition of my predecessor, this community event was an opportunity for the residents of Ottawa–Orléans to come together and discuss issues important to them as I prepared to return to Queen's Park following a busy winter break.

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Residents were also asked to bring a food donation to the Orléans–Cumberland Community Resource Centre. Held at the Community Pentecostal Church, the event was a resounding success. Over 100 persons braved the minus-25 temperatures early on Family Day morning to attend this worthwhile event.

It was a good opportunity for me to engage in frank and open dialogue about what matters most for my constituents. It was truly heartwarming to hear the feedback that they are happy with the work that our government is doing to make Orléans the best place to live, work and raise your family.

J'aimerais remercier Allan Foget, de Sobeys, pour la nourriture et Gisèle Proulx, de la Ferme Proulx, pour l'excellent sirop d'érable. Un merci très sincère aux nombreux bénévoles, particulièrement Nathalie Montpetit—who shared her grandmother's pancake recipes with us—et à tous ceux qui ont participé à faire de cet événement un grand succès.

Thank you all. Merci.

PROVINCIAL CURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: This week, the Walkerton Golf and Curling Club will host the 2015 Best Western's Intermediate Men's and Women's Provincial Curling Championship. I know that the Brier is on this week as well, but ladies and gentlemen, at home people will be very much interested in what's going on in Walkerton.

There will be 64 athletes—eight women's teams and eight men's teams—from across the province. This championship marks the club's 90th anniversary, and organizers are hoping the public will come and help celebrate the milestone in their recently renovated club.

Volunteers have been hard at work for months preparing their club and community for this provincial-level match to ensure that curlers and spectators have a wonderful experience.

I will be attending the opening ceremony on Wednesday and, being a curling enthusiast myself, I'll be volunteering and watching, with great interest, the games as they proceed over the coming days. Throughout the tournament, the Walkerton curling club will be highlighting the healthy sport of curling in our rural area and showcasing Bruce county's Saugeen Country, with all its unique activities and sights.

Two teams from my riding of Huron-Bruce who are competing in this championship area are: From the Walkerton area, the ladies' team, consisting of Sara Almas, Tracey Schaus, Tracy Cassidy and Brenda Schumacher, will be a team to look out for. The men's team, from Paisley, consisting of Al Hutchinson, Steve Gregg, Andy McCullough and Bruce Cox, will also put up some challenging matches.

To everyone coming to Walkerton this weekend, I wish them good curling.

RAPID TRANSIT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to share with you news of a monumental project now under way in my riding of Kitchener Centre and Waterloo region. The main construction of the light rail transit system, the LRT, begins this month. The ION, as it's called, will connect the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge with a rapid electric transportation system, consisting of 22 stations along a 36-kilometre transit corridor. This is the single largest public works project in the history of my region, and I am proud that my government is supporting it. Like many people, I'm looking forward to seeing fast, efficient trains moving along our main street corridor.

Mr. Speaker, what we now face is several months of construction pain for long-term gain. Adopting this forward-thinking transportation project was challenging. There were opponents, but in the end, our regional council, keeping an eye on the future, embraced this ambitious plan. We know that ION will be a game-changer for our region. A state-of-the-art rapid transit system is going to attract people and businesses. It will spur growth and prosperity and it will also help protect our agricultural land and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As the snow melts and construction crews move in, I encourage the people of Kitchener Centre to show patience. I look forward to that very first train ride along the King Street corridor in 2017 as we unveil a new chapter in my community's history.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Today I ride in the House to speak on Black History Month. Every February, Ontarians mark Black History Month to recognize the contributions that citizens of African and Caribbean heritage have made to our province and to our country. Mr. Speaker, this year's theme for Black History Month is "Year of Sport."

To echo that sentiment, I would like to recognize several prominent black athletes of the past and the present. Mr. Speaker, Willie O'Ree was often referred to as the Jackie Robinson of ice hockey due to breaking the black colour barrier in the sport. He was the first black man to play in the national hockey league. Mr. O'Ree was 95% blind in his right eye after being hit there by an errant puck. He hid his injury—an injury that would normally have led to retirement for most players.

Willie was able to persevere through hard work and determination. Two years later, he made his NHL debut with the Boston Bruins on January 18, 1958. He is an inspiration, not only for the black community, but for all visible minorities.

Also, as a Brampton resident, I want to acknowledge Anthony Bennett, who now plays for the Minnesota Timberwolves alongside fellow Canadian Andrew Wiggins, who was subsequently selected first overall the following year.

Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I was lucky enough to have been invited to attend the annual Black History Month concert at the Brampton Civic Centre, an event hosted by the Peel United Cultural Partners, a collaboration of the Congress of Black Women and the United Achievers' Club of Brampton. I was proud to participate in honouring a community that has given so much to the great province of Ontario.

I am thankful to have had the opportunity to stand among my colleagues today to pay tribute to and thank Ontarians of African and Caribbean heritage.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s lack of priority funding is causing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site as of May 1st, 2015; and

“Whereas in three years, the 10 beds dedicated to this program have seen over 300 patients utilize the program and at this time there is a waiting list for this successful program; and

“Whereas currently over 83% of patients are discharged from the restorative care program to home after a two- to eight-week program which has prepared them to confidently return home, recognizing this program increases their quality of life through the regaining of strength, balance and independence; and

“Whereas the closure of this program will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits that the restorative care program offers; and

“Whereas the alternative to the restorative care program will see patients staying in active medical beds longer, while they wait for long-term care; and

“Whereas the return of investment on the restorative care program far exceeds conventional approaches when considering the value of quality of life in the patients’ own home as compared to a long-term-care facility; and

“Whereas it is our understanding that the CCAC has cut back its services enabling patients to remain confidently in their home;

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

“That the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site be recognized for its success; and for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to showcase this program as a model to be followed across the province; and

“That the closing of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site on May 1st, 2015, not proceed and the provincial government support this health care model with base funding as an investment in the health and welfare of patients so they can confidently remain in their home.”

I totally agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with Victoria.

HOME CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition gathered by residents in Windsor and Essex county that reads as follows.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Erie St. Clair Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) has historically serviced low-mild need patients;

“Whereas this level of service is critical to the Erie St. Clair CCAC home care patients who depend on it;

“Whereas reliable and robust home care is vital to enable seniors, immobile patients and citizens with special needs to live independent and rewarding lives in their own homes;

“Whereas a reduction to any level of service offered by the CCAC causes undue anxiety to home care patients and their families;

“Whereas the 33% reduction of daily home nursing visits and other service reductions announced by the Erie St. Clair CCAC compromise the health and well-being of home care patients and their families;

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

“To request that the government of Ontario reverse each and every service reduction at the Erie St. Clair CCAC.”

I agree 100% with this, will affix my name and give it to page Dhairya to take to the Clerk.

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WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have another in a series of petitions addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.” It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I join with my dentists in wholeheartedly endorsing this and asking page Hannah to carry it.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions in support of improved winter roads maintenance from the Emsdale, Novar and Kearney area. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

“Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

“Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario’s highways are safe for travellers;

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

“That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor.”

I support this petition and give it to Niko.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas private IT contracts cost approximately twice as much as services provided by public sector IT professionals; and

“Whereas, according to the public accounts of Ontario, the government spent \$703 million on private sector IT services last year; and

“Whereas, according to the public accounts of Ontario 2009-14, the portion of the government’s IT budget going to the private sector has increased by 63% in the past five years;

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

“We ask that the government reverse the privatization of IT services that can be provided in-house and save the people of Ontario \$200 million per year by cutting out unnecessary private IT contractors and allowing the OPS to provide IT services to the government of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition, and I will give it to page Andrew.

HEALTH CARE

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

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s lack of leadership is forcing the closure of the

South Bruce Grey Health Centre - Restorative Care, Chesley Site; and

“Whereas it is ignoring evidence that the restorative care program has had major successes since its inception three years ago; and

“Whereas it has helped over 300 patients to increase their quality of life by helping them regain strength, balance and independence; and

“Whereas it has improved patient outcomes for over 80% of patients who returned home feeling confident of their recovery; and

“Whereas the loss of this critical care will see patients readmitted to hospitals, emergency room visits or having to stay in acute care beds longer, representing the costliest options in our health care system; and

“Whereas vulnerable seniors in our communities take the position that there is evidence of funding cuts for home care services; and

“Whereas our senior and all other vulnerable patients deserve access to compassionate care and treatment as close to home as possible;

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

“To provide the necessary base funding to keep the South Bruce Grey Health Centre - Restorative Care, Chesley Site in operation so that the health and welfare of our most vulnerable patients remains intact.”

I fully support this, will affix my signature and send it with page Vaughn.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected Mrs. Priscilla De Wit, from Dowling, in my riding. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario” to:

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

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

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

“Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

“Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

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

“Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with Victoria.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s youth justice facilities are run by two completely different sets of policy guidelines depending on whether they are part of the Ontario public service (OPS) and funded directly by the provincial government, or the broader public service (BPS) and funded indirectly; and

“Whereas OPS and BPS facilities serve the very same youth, and both receive their funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; and

“Whereas unlike in similar OPS facilities, there is no provincial mandate for youth corrections community agencies to provide WSIB coverage, meaning many agencies have inadequate private insurance coverage; and

“Whereas youth corrections community agencies are struggling with chronic underfunding;

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

“We strongly urge the provision of a provincial mandate for all youth corrections agencies to provide WSIB coverage to their staff. We further urge the assembly to improve systemic inequities by ensuring that all youth corrections facilities receive proper funding.”

I couldn’t agree with this more. I’m going to sign my name to it and give it to page Morgan to bring to the Clerk.

HUNTING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the greater hunting community disagrees with the decision made by the Ministry of Natural

Resources and Forestry (MNR) to close ‘McGoogan Tract’ for hunting purposes;

“Whereas the MNR did not consult with the public/hunting community on their decision to close this piece of crown land;

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

“To reopen ‘McGoogan Tract’ to allow hunters in the community to hunt on this piece of crown land during the hunting season.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

“Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

“Whereas Bill 2 ‘An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder’ sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 ‘An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder’.”

I am pleased to affix my name to this, and I’ll send it to the table with Dhairya.

1330

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, a number of which have been brought into my office by Bryan Smith from the OPAL group in my riding, and it is:

“Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

“Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

“Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents’ physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

“Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;...

“Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

“That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as to not require disposal in landfills.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present this petition on behalf of—

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

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Diane Huard in Val Caron in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas thousands of Ontarians live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

“Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

“Whereas the program was designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

“Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental” services;

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

“To do all” it can “in its power to stop the dental fund from being diverted to support other programs; and

“To fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need.”

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

APPOINTMENT OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table order in council 238-2015, appointing Brian Beamish as the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the province of Ontario.

APPOINTMENT OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table today order in council 237-2015, appointing Stephen LeClair as the Financial Accountability Officer of the province of Ontario.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Hon. Liz Sandals: Point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice or debate concerning the arrangement of proceedings for debate on concurrence in supply.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no, so please let me be clear. Just to make sure that the members understand this during debate, members need to be aware that the debate will be restricted to the particular ministry under consideration rather than a more wide-ranging debate on all of the business in the ministries concurrently, as they are used to.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I attended the estimates committee and was the lead on the estimates committee for the official opposition. I have to say that supply is the most fundamental of our responsibilities with our Legislative Assembly. That is the real purpose. One of the most fundamental purposes is for the government to seek consent on its expenditure program.

I'll just read one little bit here, a short paragraph from a book that I read recently: “Under the constitutional convention of responsible government, every minister of the crown must answer to the elected Legislature for the operation of the department that he or she supervises. It is the minister that is responsible for the performance and actions (or inactions) of the unelected and therefore unaccountable civil service. The concept is applicable to all ministers of the crown, including the first minister”—an important principle for us to remember during this discussion on supply.

Speaker, there are a host of questions that were asked of the Minister of Tourism, along with every other minister who came before the estimates committee. Many questions were posed; many remain unanswered. I have a list here of unanswered questions posed by the estimates committee that each and every one of those ministers refused or has so far not responded to. It is an arrogant display toward the Legislature when members of the official opposition ask questions of the appropriate minister during estimates, and they remain unanswered.

Just for everybody's recollection, the estimates committee sat in September, October and November last year. There has been plenty of time—significant amounts of time—for these questions to be responded to, and they remain unanswered.

In the Ministry of Tourism, for example, there were 21 agencies of that ministry that had failed to deliver an annual report to the minister and to this House. One of those agencies was the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. That agency had not filed an annual report with this House for over three years. The tabling of annual reports of those agencies is a statutory obligation of the government. It was as if the minister was not even aware that he had a statutory obligation, let alone any interest or effort to bring those annual reports to this House.

You can make excuses if you like. There is no reason why an agency of this government cannot file an annual report for over three years. What is going on? We saw that time and time again, not just with the Ministry of Tourism but with each and every ministry that came before estimates.

We saw the same thing with expenses. There is a statutory obligation—a piece of legislation that was much ballyhooed and introduced by this present government—to ensure that public sector expenses were filed and open to the public. They're not. We asked—we asked often—why this was. And, Speaker, we did get some excuses, but we never got any answers.

The same thing applies with the many questions that were posed to the electricity minister. Significant numbers of questions remain unanswered.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the Minister of Education.

1340

Hon. Liz Sandals: The Speaker specifically directed that all comments were to be about the Ministry of Tourism, not any other ministry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would again ask all members to confine their remarks to the subject being debated in the House, and I return to the member for Lanark, who has the floor.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker.

We are speaking about the Ministry of Tourism and I have given examples, but I was also demonstrating that it was not unique or specific or excluded just to the Ministry of Tourism. We saw with the Minister of Tourism a complete and cavalier oversight of that ministry and the agencies. As I said, it was a pretty common refrain through our whole time in estimates committee.

Again, where are these expenses? These expenses were also demanded by statutory obligation to be not only tabled with this House but also to be on a public website so that the public could scrutinize the expenses. They're not done. In some agencies, over a year and some even upwards of two years, where they're supposed to be filed and made public every quarter, we had agencies that were over two years not filing their expenses—unacceptable; unacceptable in any light, in any fashion,

when a government that is seeking the consent of this Legislature and, by extension, the consent of people to endeavour in a spending program refuses to be held accountable, refuses to meet its own statutory obligations.

So it begs the question. Here we have today the House—the government—bringing forth concurrence in supply. They're asking this House—they must ask this House—for our concurrence. However, they still refuse to meet their obligations out of the estimates committee and answer the questions.

I ask this question: Why is this government bringing forward this concurrence motion when they haven't even fulfilled their obligations under the estimates committee? Surely each and every one of the members on the Liberal side understands that they have to do that. The purpose of estimates committees is to examine, investigate and evaluate the spending programs and the administration of those programs so that the public can have confidence that they are getting some value, or hopefully getting some value, out of these spending programs.

But here you go: Metrolinx, no expenses? Their last financial statement was 2010—

Hon. Liz Sandals: Point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's okay. I think I know what it is. I would draw the attention of the member again to my previous comment, which is that you have to talk about concurrences in tourism, culture and sport, not Metrolinx. The member has the floor.

Does that cover it?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, it does. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: If I'm not mistaken, Metrolinx is an agency of tourism.

Hon. Liz Sandals: No, it isn't.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Okay. I'll keep going.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Not to the best of my knowledge.

The member has the floor.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Anyway, with over 300 agencies, boards and commissions, I may make a mistake with one or two of them. But that agency did come up during the estimates committees.

We have 40 minutes to debate this motion on supply, 40 minutes to ask why this Liberal government has not fulfilled its obligations. Why has it not fulfilled the obligations it made to the estimates committee? Why is it not fulfilling its obligations to the people of this province? Why is it not fulfilling its obligations to this Legislature? Put this information forward and do your job and no longer act as an irresponsible government.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I look forward to these types of debates because it gives us a chance that we don't often get to talk about what this Legislature is really all for and how we've established the rule of being able to make budgets in the province of Ontario.

What a lot of members don't realize is that the primary role of a Legislature is actually the appropriation of dollars. The basic reason that Legislatures today exist

dates back to some 700 or 800 years ago when, back in the day, people decided they didn't like what King John was doing and decided that they had to get some sort of rein on the monarch to be able to call his—how would you say it?—propensity for taxing people to the degree that he was.

We all know this famous document that was drafted some years ago called the Magna Carta. What it was all about was the people—in that case, the lords and knights, because it wasn't about the people at that point, but about the people who were sort of sub to the King—exerting some power over the King so that the King couldn't spend the money without the appropriation of Parliament. So we find ourselves, some 700 years later, with this process in our standing orders that is called concurrence in supply, and eventually the supply bill, and most members wouldn't know where that comes from.

I'm going to use my time in debate to talk about the process, which is perfectly within the standing orders and allowed. As I said, originally, the nobles decided that the King's powers had to be curbed in some way, so they decided at the time that what they would do was give Parliament the responsibility to be able to appropriate dollars. In other words, the King couldn't just go out and tax people without actually having the approval of Parliament.

So over a number of years—and I'm going to fast-forward this to where we are now—various Parliaments, because of different incidents that happened in England, more and more took control from the King and made it so that the Legislature actually does the approval—or, in their case, the House of Commons in Westminster; when it comes to Ontario and Canada, obviously, our House of Commons and the Legislature of Ontario.

You look like you're about to fall out of your seat, Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate very much what the member from Timmins–James Bay is saying and the explanation, and I think all members need to understand what we're doing right now, but at the same time I would ask him to talk about the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport estimates, which is what we're debating at the moment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am not challenging the Chair, but I am softly suggesting that the process of concurrence within our standing orders, as spelled out, is what I'm debating. We're debating this debate as a result of the standing order that deals with concurrence, and I'm speaking to the process of concurrence and I'm leading to what will actually be the estimates of today. If you're telling me that the standing orders are no longer in order, I'm waiting for you to say that, because I don't believe that they are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): And you're not challenging the Chair. I appreciate that very much and I look forward to your remarks on tourism, culture and sport.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying, concurrence is the debate and I'm speaking to the issue of concurrence.

I'd ask the Speaker to give me some latitude here in order to go through that, because I think it's important that members understand the responsibility that's put on them by previous Parliaments when it comes to the budgetary process. That's the point that I'm trying to make here.

As I was saying, to abridge the discussion, over a succession, a number of years, what's happened is that the federal House, or Westminster in England—that's where most of this comes from—decided more and more over the years to withdraw the power of the crown and to put it into the House of Commons. The reason for that was pretty simple: People wanted to have a say about what was going on, not only with how much tax they were being taxed by the crown, but also what the money was going to be spent on. Over the years, our Parliament has become a much more responsible Parliament in the sense that the Parliament and the Legislatures of the land decide the measures of taxation, how much revenue is needed, and where those dollars are going to be spent—for example, within the Ministry of Tourism or any of these other ministries that are listed under this particular concurrence motion.

Members have to take seriously what their responsibility is, and that is that the government has the right and the obligation to put forward a budget. They did so last year, and this House, by way of its majority, rejected that budget. As a result, we ended up in an election. But the process is that the government introduces a budget because they determine how much money they need to be able to operate the government and the various services, such as the Ministry of Transportation, and they need to be able to make sure that the process allows for members of this assembly on the opposition side—and government—to be able to question those particular estimates, such as the Ministry of Tourism, because that's really what the accountability is: that government can't just have the right to spend money, do what it wants, and have nobody know about it or nobody have a say. There has to be a process.

1350

The process by which we appropriate dollars in Ontario is based on the Westminster model, which is that the government proposes a budget; once they've proposed a budget and the budget eventually passes, as it did this summer, then the estimates are tabled. The estimates at the time—for example, the Ministry of Tourism was one of the estimates that were tabled—then go before our estimates committee, and then members of the estimates committee decide in a rotation of parties which ministry is going to get reviewed: Is it the Ministry of Transportation? Is it the Ministry of Tourism? Is it the Ministry of Finance? Which one is it?

Then there's an in-depth look at each of those estimates at the estimates committee, which I think is a more recent phenomenon that we have here in Ontario. That probably came around 30 years ago, where we have an actual estimates committee. Before that, the estimates were conducted by various committees based on the responsibilities of each committee. Some committees, for

example, would have natural resources; another committee may have the Ministry of Tourism, so those estimates were done separately, but we opted some 30 years ago to have an estimates committee that looks strictly at estimates.

But the point is this: By the third Thursday in November, the estimates that are not finished are deemed to have been concurred with. They're deemed to have been done and reported to the House. We find ourselves now at that point. As of the third Thursday of November, the estimates were reported to this Legislature, and once the estimates are before us—such as the Ministry of Tourism—you then have to go through a process of accepting those expenditures. The government proposed a budget. The government passed a budget with its majority. The government then sent those estimates, such as the Ministry of Tourism's, to the estimates committee to be reviewed. The committee did its job in reviewing estimates such as the Ministry of Tourism's, and then it reported back to the House, because now you need to get concurrence on those estimates that have been reported back to the House.

So we find ourselves at this point in a two-hour debate on the various ministries that are named inside this particular concurrence motion. We find ourselves now being able to deal with those particular ministries one at a time—in this case, the Ministry of Tourism. For example, in the Ministry of Tourism estimates, I've often felt that there is a real gem in the province of Ontario on James Bay having to do with tourism, as it approaches not just Moosonee, but it approaches Moose Factory and other communities.

For example, one of the things that the government could have done in these particular estimates is to appropriate X amount of dollars per year for the next number of years so that the communities of James Bay can organize themselves in such a way as to be able to develop infrastructure, so that when tourists come to James Bay, they actually have some good infrastructure to be met with.

Unfortunately, infrastructure in places like Moosonee and most of our coastal communities and most of our reserves leaves a little bit to be desired. Water and sewer systems are old, fragile and breaking. Our streets are in pretty rough shape. A municipal council or a reserve is not going to pay to pave a street when they know they've got to rip the pipe up, and that's a situation that most of these communities find themselves in. Very basic dollars towards being able to fix the infrastructure in those communities would have been appropriate to be able to develop a tourism strategy—

Hon. Liz Sandals: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order from the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd be delighted to be on number 9, which is infrastructure, but we are on order number 8, which is tourism.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I heard the member from Timmins–James Bay talking about the

tourism interests in his riding leading to infrastructure discussion, but I would again ask the member for Timmins–James Bay to confine his remarks to the debate we're currently undertaking on concurrence in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying, the government could have, in the Ministry of Tourism budget, taken a look at providing the dollars necessary to be able to develop infrastructure on James Bay, both hard and soft, so that we're able to present to people who travel up on the James Bay a better destination package—so that, when they get there, there is not only something to see, but there's some infrastructure there to be able to view it on. It's unfortunate that the government decided not to do that in these estimates, but we're always hopeful for tomorrow, and who knows what's going to happen next?

The next part of this—obviously at the end of this vote, when it's done—is that there will have to be a supply bill that comes back to the Legislature to be voted on. With that, I look forward to the next estimate.

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

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be stacked at the end of this afternoon's debate.

Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Debate? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To my crowd and my fans: May I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

As I was saying in the case of the James Bay, there is very, very weak infrastructure, and if the government had decided to partner with, first of all, the only municipality on the James Bay, which is Moosonee, and then made some sort of deal with the federal government to deal with issues on reserve, to deal with the local services board, MoCreebec, we could have been in a position where we'd actually develop some much-needed infrastructure to be able to develop tourism on the James Bay.

I think there is a huge opportunity for economic development for the people living on the James Bay and a way to be able to help that local economy. But it's going to take some vision on the part of government to say that we're looking at this over multiple years, because we're talking about a fairly large investment by the time you fix roads, fix water and sewer, put some pavement on the roads, do some building of basic infrastructure to support tourism, some work on the train as it

comes into Moosonee. It's going to take a fair amount of money.

It's like anything else, Speaker: Build it, and they will come. But you've got to build it, and where we are right now, it's not built. We have a community called Moosonee, we have MoCreebec, we have Moose Factory and we have the communities north of that, but there isn't any integrated plan by which to develop tourism in that particular area.

On the issue of infrastructure, I think the larger issue—and our leader Andrea Horwath has spoken to this a number of times—is that what municipalities really need is stability in knowing how much money they're going to get over multiple years. One of the difficulties we currently have with infrastructure spending is that the government, because they love to have press conferences and say, “Hey, great. Look what we did. We gave you all this money,” doesn't provide stable infrastructure dollars to communities over multiple years.

Now, imagine if you're sitting around a municipal council table somewhere in northern Ontario, south-western Ontario, Toronto—or anywhere else, for that fact—and you're trying to figure out what your priorities are when it comes to being able to invest in infrastructure. You're really kind of at the whim of what the provincial and federal governments are going to do on infrastructure. If you know that water is the big thing, then you put forward water projects. If it's arenas, then you put forward arena projects. All of those things are issues that municipalities need to deal with, and they're all equally important—making sure the arena roof doesn't leak. Unfortunately, we just saw a case where there was an arena—I'm not exactly sure where—and the snow load collapsed the roof.

We need to make sure that our infrastructure is safe, and the best people to make those kinds of decisions, I think, are at the local level. We've argued for a long time that we should be saying to municipalities across this province, our partners, “Here's how much money you're going to get each and every year for the next five years,” so that councils can go back to their council meetings, sit down, decide what their priorities are and say, “We know we're at least going to get this kind of money. We can plan year one, year two, year three, year five what we're going to do when it comes to planning for infrastructure in our communities.”

I think that's something that has been lost on the government. Yes, we have our gas tax, which is helpful—there's no question. Only those communities that have infrastructure, when it comes to transit, are the ones that get the lion's share of it, but it's something. So you know you're going to get some money. But for most communities, it really is a problem because you don't have a good enough barometer on knowing how much money you're going to have. You may have something right now that has to be done—let's say a water or sewer project that needs to be done because of breakage and whatever may have happened. Then, at the same time, you've got to start planning for the arena; you've got to plan for the

pool; you've got to plan for municipal streets. You've got all kinds of plans that you have to plan for when it comes to infrastructure spending. So I would much prefer the government to have decided, yes, we're going to do infrastructure spending in one way that allows municipalities to be able to plan.

1400

With that, Speaker, I wanted to put that on the record. I have and I feel so much better because of it. Thank you for sharing.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up in the House today to discuss the concurrence-in-supply motions. I think it's an unusual way to talk about the important issues that are facing the Treasury Board of this province. I'm not quite sure what the thinking was when the Conservatives refused unanimous consent, but here we are.

So we're going to be talking about infrastructure, and I must tell you, as a fairly new finance critic, that following the money in this place is a very interesting process, I find. The fall economic statement had some broad gestures. The finance committee has travelled around the province. We heard from Ontarians from the north, the south, the east, the west. They have a lot of ongoing issues which are systemic in nature and very much tied to the way that funding flows from this place and the priorities of this Legislature, and, in particular, of this government. Then we have the estimates, where we sort of peel back the layers, of course. That was an interesting process as well. I do like that.

From my perspective, the most accurate financial data that comes out of the Ontario Legislature is the public accounts, because that's the money that has already been spent. Those are real dollars. As many of you know, we have a \$12.5-billion operational deficit, which makes this concurrence-in-supply motion all the more important.

On the issue of infrastructure, I've been carrying around the 2014 Auditor General's report—it's my new little mini bible—because it does raise some very serious financial issues, particularly on infrastructure. She highlighted that there are inconsistencies in the way that infrastructure is funded in this province. It's unfortunate the supply motion is crafted this way, because infrastructure pins so many things together. It ties the economy. It ties the productivity of this province. There are environmental considerations to the way infrastructure funding flows. And yet here we have this Auditor General's report, which has indicated those inconsistencies that I referenced around funding to the tune of \$8.2 billion in additional funding that flowed from the provincial treasury over the last 74 public infrastructure projects.

She found—this is on page 197—that “where Infrastructure Ontario concluded that private-sector project delivery” under the AFP and procurement “would be more cost effective, we noted that the tangible costs (such as construction, financing, legal services, engineering services and project management services) were

estimated to be nearly \$8 billion higher than they were estimated to be if the projects were contracted out and managed by the public sector.”

What was really interesting is that before Christmas, of course, we challenged the government on this report, as we should. It’s our job to do so. The Minister of Economic Development came back and said, “We’re the best in the world for infrastructure funding.” I don’t think spending \$8.2 billion that the province doesn’t have is anything to brag about, I must tell you.

But on the financing costs, these are not questioned. Financing costs under public infrastructure over the last 74 infrastructure projects are indicated on page 203 of the Auditor General’s report. Financing costs under a public sector comparator were \$500 million. Financing costs under the AFP and the procurement process were \$7 billion. That’s a difference of \$6.5 billion. These are real numbers. So when we get a chance to go to estimates, we’re going to be able to challenge the Minister of Finance in a very real way around these numbers.

The ancillary costs are not that different; there’s a difference of \$400 million. But the big difference is the retained risks. This is where she found that there was no empirical evidence. So in a public sector comparator, Infrastructure Ontario made the case that those 74 infrastructure projects would have a retained cost of \$18.6 billion, and then AFP would be only \$4 billion. This is the number in question, Mr. Speaker, because this is the number which she basically says there’s no empirical evidence for. In fact, this is essentially a made-up number.

As we discuss the supply motions in this House, as we discuss where money is going and where money is not going, this is a huge red flag for us on this side of the House, for New Democrats, a long-standing issue for us; and it should be of great concern to the government, because if there was ever a government that was looking to save money and to direct money where it was going to make a difference, through the infrastructure ministry, then you would be taking a second look at it. Instead, that’s not what we found at all. That’s not what we heard from the Minister of Economic Development. He thinks they’re the best in the world—and therefore it must be true.

I do want to say—because I think it’s very clear that there are serious issues around trust and the way the funding does flow—that the Auditor General also raised a very serious issue—very serious, Mr. Speaker: the conflict-of-interest declarations around how these contracts are established. She found that, “According to the agency’s policies, each participant involved in evaluating submissions received in response to the request for qualifications/proposals that the agency issues for AFP projects is required to sign a conflict-of-interest declaration and disclose any relationships with any entities identified in the submissions. Evaluation teams typically include staff from Infrastructure Ontario; project sponsors; and various legal, financial, technical and cost consultants.” Of course, that’s why it costs so much.

“However, in a sample of projects that we reviewed, Infrastructure Ontario was unable to provide us with signed conflict-of-interest declarations for a number of the participants involved in evaluating submissions, both at the request-for-qualifications and request-for-proposal stages.”

So, Mr. Speaker, on the Ministry of Infrastructure funding, how funding is flowing out to the province—because this government has said they’re going to spend \$130 billion over the next 10 years. But if you carve off almost 25% of that, you are not going to see the jobs; you are not going to see the needed infrastructure; you are not going to close the gap on transportation, on transit ways, on water systems, on sewers, on storm water. It just isn’t going to happen. If the government cares about infrastructure in the province of Ontario, they will rethink public-private partnerships in this province.

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

Mrs. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Infrastructure. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote is being demanded. It will be stacked at the end of the rest of the afternoon’s debate.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I move the concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It’s my pleasure to have a chance to speak a bit to the estimate process for the Ministry of Transportation. As has been noted—you know, in this place, we don’t get—especially as an opposition member—a lot of opportunity to really look at how the money is spent, especially when compared to other jurisdictions like a municipality, for example, which tend to go through the budgets line by line; or the American system, where they spend a lot of time looking at items line by line. But here, we really don’t spend that much time.

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Anyway, I’m pleased to have a chance to talk about the Ministry of Transportation. Certainly, one of the biggest issues for me, in the riding of Parry Sound Muskoka, in the last couple of winters has been winter road maintenance. In fact, I have now presented some petitions with 2,950 signatures with regard to winter road maintenance. Just to give a little history on that, I’ve been elected for 13 years now, and in the first 10 years I hardly had a complaint about winter road maintenance. At that time, there was a system in place called managed outsourcing. I think “managed” is the key, where the Minister of Transportation took an active role in sending controllers out to look at winter road conditions and actually managing the private sector contractor who had the contract, directing them on when to put sand and salt

down and, importantly, paying for the cost of that sand and salt so it didn't come out of the contract price.

We've now switched, in the last couple of years—and it would be interesting to know whether it's saving money for the government or not, especially if you take into account all of the accidents that have been occurring and the big increase in accidents and, I would think, potential liability as well. They have a system called an area maintenance contract. The key difference is that the private sector contractor is now responsible for everything, so they send their own people out to patrol the roads and decide themselves on when and how much to sand and salt etc. I can say that, whereas in the first 10 years I was elected, I might get one or two complaints in a year about road maintenance, in the last couple of years it has been a daily thing. Obviously, it's important to the people in my area and, I'm sure, across the province or I wouldn't have had so many people sign the petition that I've been putting forward. In fact, I went to Huntsville a couple of weeks ago for two hours just to provide the opportunity for people to sign the petition, and 320 people came in in two hours.

I think we need to look at what was working, and the managed outsourcing system did work. The last couple of years, it has been a little scary out there at times; just very inconsistent conditions. Even if you get dry pavement on one section of highway, you just never know when you're going to run into glare ice. I've certainly experienced that myself. I've had cars on secondary highways spin out of control in front of me. I've seen Highway 11 closed this year a few times because the transport trucks were stuck on it because there wasn't any sand on the road south of Gravenhurst.

When I did the petition-signing in Huntsville, virtually every person that came in, of those 320 people in two hours, had some personal story. I talked to somebody in the resort business who manages resorts and has to work in Toronto and was considering moving out of Huntsville because of the risk of having to do that trip every week.

It's a big issue, and I'm trying to make a positive suggestion to go to a system that did work and that has a proven track record.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You mean unprivatize?

Mr. Norm Miller: In terms of the estimates, it would be good to know whether any money is being saved.

The member from the NDP is saying "unprivatize." No, that's not what I'm suggesting, but I am suggesting that MTO take more responsibility and go back to the system where they actually assume responsibility. Instead, they've hired all kinds more people to patrol the highways. Rather than just driving around and seeing whether the standards have been met, I'd rather see the people actually assume responsibility and direct the private contractor when to put sand and salt on.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: On the issue of transportation and the way funding is flowing on this file, we have some serious concerns, obviously. As we went around

the province, we heard very strong recommendations from the people who are living the real experience, the truth, if you will, of a lack of transportation options. For that reason, if we were to look at the way that funding around maintenance actually happens in this province, we would recommend that in the fiscal year 2015-16, the budget propose a plan to phase out area maintenance contracts for highway maintenance and restore the responsibility for delivering the service to the OPS. I think there are savings to be had, and that's why we'll be fighting for that. We heard from our northern municipalities. This is a real, real issue.

If we're talking about unlocking the potential of the north through a shared prosperity and economy, they need transit options. For that reason, I think that we would be looking for the government, obviously, to reinstate the Northlander and to put \$20 million a year for four years into passenger rail service in northeastern Ontario.

I couldn't believe, in the last session, when someone said, "Well, why can't they just drive?" They can't drive because we don't have the proper maintenance.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Who said that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I won't say who. That would be rude.

Finally, though, I think that the Ministry of Finance, in the fiscal year 2015-16 budget, should identify permanent revenue sources adequate for sustaining at least \$2.9 billion per year of investment in Ontario's transit and transportation infrastructure—the government shouldn't have any problems with that—but that those revenues should flow directly into the Trillium Trust, to be dedicated for such purposes, and not into general revenues, and that the collection of these revenues not have the effect of increasing income inequality.

I thought about bringing up the whole issue, because the LRT was mentioned earlier. Of course, the government had proposed originally to invest almost two thirds of the funding for that infrastructure project, that transit project. That did not happen. Then I was thinking that the bullet train that the Minister of Transportation once said would happen along the Windsor-Toronto corridor, of course, didn't happen as well.

We're being realistic. I think that, as far as the money flowing on the transportation file, these are realistic and tangible issues that will strengthen the economy and the province of Ontario.

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

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, and we're darned right to vote against that budget. It's the biggest step backwards that we've seen in a long time. This is a case where the Liberals try to say that they're progressive, and they try to say they're doing the right thing. But they're out-conservating the Conservatives.

Listen, I remember. I was in this House, along with others, when the Conservative government of the day first started the privatization of winter road maintenance. Je me souviens.

When it was originally done, the only thing the government had done is—we used to have a hybrid system. The Ministry of Transportation was responsible for the planning and the dispatching of winter road maintenance plows, salt trucks etc. We had a mixed system, where 50% of the plows were private and 50% were ministry. The idea was that if you needed more plows because it had snowed, you'd call in the contractors, and you didn't pay them when you didn't need them. The Conservatives decided: "Let's only have private plows," so they got rid of the MTO plows, and the Conservatives went to where it was all private plows.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka is perfectly right: That particular model allowed the ministry to manage when the salt truck was going to be on the road, what the circuit times were going to be etc.

I remember that the members of the Liberal opposition, in the days of Mike Harris, got up in this House and they howled. They howled. They sounded more left-wing than the NDP. They kept on saying, "Boy, when we get to government, we're going to fix this, because it's terrible that Mike Harris has privatized winter road maintenance."

They get to power, the Liberals, and they out-conservative the Conservatives, because now what they've done is they've privatized the entire system. They didn't just privatize the rest of the plows. They privatized the people who go out and do the dispatching. They privatized the people who do the patrolling. They privatized the engineering. Everything has been privatized. So the Liberals went further than the Conservatives themselves were able to go.

If I was a Conservative, I'd be upset—very upset—that I'd been outflanked on the right by the Liberal Party. I'm telling you, you guys are progressive. These guys are just Conservatives.

I voted against that budget, with bells on, because the Liberals have this uncanny ability to say one thing and do the complete opposite to what they say.

Again, I just say that under the winter road maintenance contract scenario, what's even more interesting is that Kathleen Wynne is the one who signed the last part of the privatization, when she was Minister of Transportation. Remember the progressive Premier who believes in public services and wants to do what's right?

I think I'm doing this well, right?

Miss Monique Taylor: Talks a good game.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: Talks a good game, but what she did was that she privatized the rest of it.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, as anybody else who lives in Ontario, will see that our roads are now in worse condition. Highways are being shut where they never were shut before, and we're spending more money than we did under the old system, either the original system that was there at the beginning or the hybrid system the Conservatives put in place. So they're ideologically completely to the right and making us spend more money and pay for less services. And here's what they want us

to do, and I'm not going to take the bait as a New Democrat. They want us to blame the contractors.

You know what? It's not the contractors who are at fault. Who is it that negotiated with the contractors? Who is it that put into the contracts the system that we have now? Contractors would like to do the right thing, but they can't because the contracts that were negotiated increased the circuit times, which means to say that there's less time spent to plow a kilometre of highway, and the way that the contracts are written, they're somewhat penalized if they use more salt or sand. I blame the Liberals—I was going to say "Conservatives." That would not be right—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: To-may-toes, to-mah-toes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To-may-toes, to-mah-toes—that's a good point.

The Liberal conservative party of Ontario—I blame them for having done this.

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

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote has been requested. It will be stacked at the end of this afternoon's debate.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak today. I just want to allude back to my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington right at the start of this. This is a fundamental responsibility of the government; it's a fundamental responsibility of ministers to be aware of and to explain how the money—the taxes that are paid by all the great Ontarians we serve—is spent and what value we receive for that money. It's something as simple as filing a report and accountability. This government brought in Bill 8, the MPP accountability act, yet many of their ministers are delinquent in filing their reports.

I'm going to talk very specifically to a number of issues, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to start off by saying that this government has had 11 years to put Ontario on a path to financial security, yet they have dug us deeper into debt. Ontario's deficit is \$12 billion and counting. It's larger than the deficit of any other province, and bigger than all of the provinces' and the federal government's deficits combined.

Let's talk about debt: \$228 billion and counting, or 41% of our gross domestic product, or \$20,166 in debt per person. Every child born in Ontario will be saddled with this amount, the equivalent of paying for three years

of college. It's bigger than what this government spends on social services in Ontario.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: As the Speaker is well aware, the debate here is on the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's actually the Ministry of Community and Social Services, but I think the point you are making is a valid one: The member needs to talk about the Ministry of Community and Social Services spending and estimates.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, that segues perfectly, although I'm sure children's services has lots of accountability issues they'd like to talk about as well, and I'm sure one of my colleagues at some point will ask that minister for some answers. When I was the critic not long ago, I didn't get many answers on that file.

I'm going to go right to the disaster of SAMS. This government—and I did sit through the estimates committee—came out and brought a brand new program and said, after delaying it a number of times, “We are confident that this is going to be fine. We're going to roll this out, and there's not going to be anything. It's going to be a seamless transition.” Mr. Speaker, I'll bring to your attention that they have already had to dump an additional \$16 million into this program. That wasn't in the estimates discussion we had. There was nothing in estimates that brought up this \$16 million, and that is to bail out municipalities who they have put in jeopardy due to stress on their staff, overtime and all of the problems with the minor glitches that the minister and the Premier both continue to allude are all that is wrong with the SAMS disaster.

We don't know whether that \$16 million was one-time or what that number may balloon to. We also heard an estimate once upon a time that a gas plant was going to cost us \$40 million as taxpayers, and that was \$1.2 billion, so we can talk about estimates.

They've also just recently hired—they're now trying to use the terminology “third-party adviser,” which we all know is just a high-paid consultant. We don't know what the estimate of that amount is, and we don't know what the estimate of that is going to be down the road, but what we do know is that there are going to be huge amounts of costs to the taxpayers of Ontario.

These are the constant things. When I went to estimates—that was my first opportunity to be in estimates—we asked very clearly about a number of different questions. When I was back, I was doing some more stuff on the Family Responsibility Office, with my colleague Mr. Michael Harris from Kitchener–Conestoga. This question was on November 4, 2014, and he's still awaiting a reply: “Could you provide the committee with an updated chart of staffing at the FRO comparable to the breakdown of the 2010 annual report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario?” That's still outstanding, Mr. Speaker.

Again, my good colleague Mr. Michael Harris from Kitchener–Conestoga: “Can you provide the committee with updated data on total phone calls, answered calls, failed calls and the percentage of total calls comparable to the chart in the 2010 annual report?”

Myself, from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: “Can you provide the committee with the number of vehicles impounded and licences removed in the last two years?” We're still waiting on those answers, Mr. Speaker. It's about accountability and estimates.

Again, my colleague Michael Harris from Kitchener–Conestoga: “Can you provide this committee with a breakdown of the \$2.1 billion in arrears reported in the Auditor General's 2012 annual report?”

And again, still with FRO, I asked the question: “What are the average arrears and average cost per FRO case? What are the plans to reduce the FRO caseload? What are the costs, and the return on these costs, for the Good Parents Pay website?”

These are things that my colleagues across the province are hearing, and we're asking for simple answers to ensure that we know where that is coming from. We want to know where every dollar given by the taxpayer is spent, and whether it's providing true value to the taxpayer. I don't think that's too much to ask; in fact, I think that's a pretty fundamental responsibility of all of cabinet and this government: to answer to the great people of Ontario.

In developmental services, I asked, “How many people are being served by the \$810-million funding announced for developmental services? How long are the wait-lists (by riding)?” Mr. Speaker, sadly, I'm still waiting for that. Again, there are people who are in need out there.

You come to estimates expecting the government to have a game plan. You expect them to have an estimate and a game plan, and you would hope that they have targets for each dollar they're spending, because Lord knows they are very good spenders, but what we want to see is the outcome on the other end. What's the value to the taxpayer?

On transfer payment agencies, my colleague Mr. Randy Hillier from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington asked a question, and this was on November 5, 2014: “Can you tell me how many transfer payment agencies are receiving less than \$120,000? How many employees are tasked with monitoring and evaluating the efficacy of transfer payment agencies and the funds spent? Could we get a couple of examples of audited financial statements and the tools for following up? Can we have information on the numbers of people who received services from transfer payment agencies last year?”

I think those are all valid questions. I think the taxpayers of Ontario want to know that type of information. It's a valid question. I'm not certain why a minister, to this day, has not answered those questions that I've cited here. There are a number of others, but I'll leave some of those for some of my colleagues to question as well.

I'm going to come back again for a little bit to SAMS. This was one of those ones that we were assured, espe-

cially after the eHealth boondoggle and that rollout of a program that we know has not provided any value to the taxpayer of Ontario—again, a billion-dollar boondoggle.

We take our job and our responsibility as opposition to ask those questions in a very diligent manner, a very practical manner, to ensure that we are in fact holding the government to account. They have an accountability requirement. They have a responsibility to the taxpayer, and we are doing that to ensure that the taxpayer has confidence in what this government is doing, or what any government is doing. They have to have a sense that their money that is being taxed is coming forward to pay for the products, services and programs that the people of Ontario so richly deserve.

SAMS has been nothing but a boondoggle. We're cutting millions of dollars on front-line care, but we're finding \$16 million at the drop of a hat to fix an administrative glitch that they knew about. I'm not certain they even know how to fix that glitch, which is sad in its own case. That's \$16 million that could have gone to the front line of health care, to those people in need, to those less fortunate in our society who are struggling with the high cost of energy—the highest in North America, I might add—under this government. They're struggling with affordable housing; there are shortages all over the province in that area. They're struggling with being able to pay their basic bills.

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The \$16 million—that's just a start. We have no estimate of what that number might balloon to, and it scares me to think, after watching the gas plant boondoggle in this House, where we may go with that one. It scares me to no end that we're talking again about—there was no estimate for this third-party consultant, third-party adviser, whatever they want to call it. You can call it whatever name you wish. It's like suggesting that a revenue tool is not a tax.

The people of Ontario get to it very quickly. They understand, and what they're wanting is for people to be able to have a plan in place, know that it's going to work and see what the valuable outcome to the people, at the end of the day, is.

The human and social cost to the spending by this government—decreasing ODSP income supports for families, thus forcing people into a life of poverty through no fault of their own. They've cut the community start-up benefit. Again, not any of that was discussed, I believe, in estimates committee.

In my backyard, we have a program called the Restorative Care Unit at the Chesley hospital. It costs \$810,000 a year to run that program, and they've cut that. Yet they can find \$16 million to fix their glitch, their error, on the SAMS program. There was no estimate of that. There was no estimate that I was aware of when I went to those committees that there were going to be those kinds of cuts coming. I struggle sometimes with how they can't find money for home care for our frail seniors and yet they can find this to fix and to cover up what I would suggest is a significant boondoggle that's impacting the

most unfortunate people, less fortunate people, in our communities.

You couldn't find money for developmental services, which resulted in 21,000 people now languishing on a wait-list. That's deplorable that they didn't have that, again, in their estimates and how they were going to address that. They need to ensure that they have estimates that are going to be practical and realistic and they're going to be able to find a way to do that.

They've cut programs like the beloved ranger program, the oldest youth work program in Ontario.

This is billions of dollars that have been wasted, money that could have paid for critical care to help save the lives of Ontarians, lifted them out of poverty and provided the myriad of critical services they need and deserve.

Just this weekend I noted that there was about \$3.5 million given to stop the closures of some hospitals in the riding of Mr. Rinaldi, Quinte–West. I would like to know if that was in the estimates.

At the end of the day, we're going to continue to hold them accountable, and that's part of this process today.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to add a few comments on the supply motion for community and social services. It's unfortunate that we have so little time, because literally you could spend an entire hour on how funding is not being spent in the appropriate places on this issue.

My colleague has already referenced SAMS. I was going to talk a little bit about it. I will reinforce one issue that he raised, though: We really do think that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs should recommend to the Minister of Finance that the government, in its fiscal year 2015-16 budget, offer compensation to municipalities equal to any unbudgeted additional cost resulting from the implementation of the Social Assistance Management System. Right now it's estimated at \$16 million, but you know that you have to challenge those numbers. The incompetency of this software program, which the front-line OPS and OPSEU members warned the government would happen because this was a flawed program purchased by the ministry—it was known to fail in the United States, in two major States. We should learn from those other jurisdictions; we should. It's just common sense.

But I'm going to just spend a few minutes talking about what the Auditor General said on community and social services, and I'm going to summarize what her findings were, because the auditor, of course, tracks the money. On this file, in particular, the flaws in the funding directly impact the quality and the integrity of the people of this province.

The auditor found that “people with the highest-priority needs are not usually placed first.... Funding is not needs-based and cost variances are unexplained.... There is no consistent prioritization process across regions.... Roles and responsibilities over children's resi-

dential services need clarity.” There are vulnerable children in the system whose needs are not being met.

“There is no consistent process to access children’s residential services.” Now, these are desperate parents looking for much-needed crisis intervention. The auditor found that there was no consistent process.

“Program lacks performance indicators.” This is a quality control issue. If there was ever a ministry to have a strong quality benchmark on, this would be the ministry.

“Crisis placements are often not short-term as intended.” Now, please remember, this is the Auditor General, an independent officer of this Legislature. These were her findings, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, she said, “Wait-lists for residential services are long.” All of us in this House know this to be true.

“Deficiencies in managing vacancies.” So when people burn out because this ministry is seriously underfunded and strategic funding is not getting to where it needs to go most—people burn out and they leave the system.

“Adult residences may go uninspected for years.” The most vulnerable, who need 24-hour care, and “Adult residences may go uninspected for years.”

“Care standards are few and open to interpretation”—open to interpretation. The actual maintaining of hygiene, nutrition, mental health, physical health—these are open to interpretation: unbelievable in the province of Ontario.

There are “numerous problems with data integrity,” and we all know that you need the proper data. You need the information to properly serve people in the system. This is incredible.

Now, finding that \$810 million—we could start a movie. It’s like Finding Nemo in this place, because I cannot find where that money is going. I intend to find it, because there are clearly areas where that money can be better spent.

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

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

As a recorded vote is being requested, it will be stacked to the end of this afternoon’s debate.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, government order number 12.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I recognize the Attorney General to move the motion.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I move the concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy. Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It’s my pleasure to have an opportunity, a few short minutes, to talk about the Ministry of Energy.

I note that there are a number of unanswered questions to do with the Ministry of Energy from the estimates meeting in November 2014, so I wanted to get those on the record, because it was unanswered questions from estimates that could have prevented the Ornge problems happening if they had been answered. There were actually questions asked about Dr. Mazza’s salary at estimates committee, and the government never answered them in a timely manner. Had that been exposed, I’m sure it would have been a huge red flag both for the government and certainly for the opposition.

Mr. Randy Hillier, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, has an unanswered question regarding details that were requested on the \$5.4-million investment in the Advanced Energy Centre at MaRS, downtown Toronto. Again, Mr. Hillier: Information was requested on anticipated future electrical energy exports from Ontario.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, John Yakabuski, asked a question in which information was requested on the portion of the average hydro bill attributable to wind energy.

Mr. Yakabuski: A confirmation was requested as to whether over 700 megawatts of wind energy that is under construction and the approval process are subject to various appeal procedures. Mr. Yakabuski asked about the allocations under the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, LEAP. Additional information was requested about recent allocations take-up or surpluses by various local distribution companies, the LDCs, under the LEAP program. Information was also requested on how these funds are allocated to individual low-income residential customers.

Mr. Hillier asked about a Hydro-Québec comparative electricity price study. The Web link to this study by Hydro-Québec was requested. A verification of meter data by the IESO, Independent Electricity System Operator, was requested by Mr. Hillier. Additional information was requested on verification or auditing of electrical meter data assembled by IESO. Mr. Hillier also requested background on meter data management and repository: Information was requested on background information or comparative studies conducted by IESO related to the meter data management and repository model adopted in Ontario. I hope the government, this time around, answers those questions in a timely manner.

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I wanted to talk about energy because it’s a huge issue in Parry Sound–Muskoka, particularly affordability. I just have two minutes to do it, which is not enough time, but I want to get on the record that I’ve had all kinds of emails and calls, people coming to the office looking for help with their hydro bills. Grant Hallman sent me a long letter with his concerns. Ray Gough of Gravenhurst also wrote to me, and hundreds and hundreds of other people have either written or come in.

Because I don't have enough time to go through it all, I would just point people to the Auditor General's annual report that came out in December last year and suggest they read the smart meter section where it points out and explains the global adjustment, which is a relatively new creation to pay for the above-market costs, that the government has signed the contracts through the feed-in-tariff program. It's a little scary because it points out that the global adjustment cost, which is now 7% of people's hydro bills, has gone up 1,200%, from 0.4 cents a kilowatt hour to 5.5 cents a kilowatt hour. It's going to be a total of \$50 billion from 2006 to 2013—\$7.7 billion in 2013 alone. Huge, huge numbers, and people are paying for it on their hydro bills. The only people who actually see it have signed a fixed contract. I had a senior come in. They didn't have a huge bill, but of their \$150 bill, \$61 was global adjustment and \$40 was the actual energy cost. Affordability is a huge issue across Parry Sound–Muskoka.

With that, that's all the time I have and I'm going to sit down now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm glad the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned the smart meters. It's clearly outlined in the Auditor General's report, and I would like to remind people that this is an independent officer of the Legislature whose sole, non-partisan job is to follow the money, and, very quickly, Mr. Speaker, what she found—you know, it was unfortunate that the Minister of Energy said that this was too complicated for the auditor. After all, I would just like to put on the record that what he was saying is that having an MBA, a highly coveted accounting designation that is difficult to obtain and decades of experience in a competitive, male-dominated industry amounts to the same thing as being someone's daughter. I want to get that on record because it was a shameful day in this Legislature.

What the Auditor General said, though, about the Ministry of Energy and the way funding flows through that ministry is, "Cost of service reviews do not take into account all information and practices that could affect consumer rates," and, "Rate designs could disadvantage some customers." Actually, we know that's happening. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka just gave us a good example.

There is "Lack of clarity in rate designs." There are "Different weighting of fixed and usage-based charges." This is key, Mr. Speaker: "Settlement proposals are not reviewed from a public interest perspective." This is a gas plant issue. There was no reason to make that contract whole. That was not in the public interest, and I'm sure there are some members there who would agree with that. There was no need to do that.

There is "Additional review needed for accuracy and validity of information submitted to the board."

Finally, she makes a very interesting observation in that the board needs "more training," essentially is what

she says—greater oversight, more training. They need to fulfill their responsibility as a board.

When she actually goes through the audited accounts, though, she mentions, "Improvement needed in addressing consumer complaints." The seniors who come into my office, who are deciding whether or not to eat or heat their homes, would concur with that.

"Inspection efforts focused primarily on gas marketers," "Insufficient audits of gas utilities." Finally, "Lack of assessment"—as I mentioned—"of the board's performance in meeting its mandated objectives."

This is, once again, an excellent report that this government should pay due attention to.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Very quickly, Speaker, I just want to point out yet again that energy is another one of those files where the Liberals have out-conservated the Conservatives. They've become the Conservative Party of Ontario and you guys are now the progressives.

I remember Ernie Eves. He was the Premier of the day. He started the privatization of Ontario Hydro. Even Ernie had to back off. Ernie said, "You can't do all of this stuff because the rates are going to go through the roof, citizens are going to feel it in the pocket and, more importantly, businesses are going to get hurt." Even Ernie after a while said, "I can't go that far."

I remember the Liberals in opposition going apoplectic over Ernie Eves wanting to privatize hydro. They said that when they got to power, they'd be different. God, were they different. They turned out to be the real Conservative Party of Ontario.

Congratulations once again to the Liberals.

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

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote is being requested. It will be stacked at the end of this afternoon's debate.

Orders of the day?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I move the concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: What we're talking about here, of course, are documents from the estimates, and we've learned that we simply can't trust the numbers that come from this government, so I'm going to talk about my proof of that.

Let's go back to public accounts, which tells us just how reliable the government's predictions were. The public accounts of 2013 show that last year government spending actually increased in 15 out of 24 government ministries. In addition, revenue shortfalls were experi-

enced in many ministries. For example, infrastructure saw a revenue decrease of \$60 million, but increased spending of \$85 million.

The deficit actually grew last year and is projected to grow again this year, despite the Liberals using a contingency reserve fund of \$1 billion. We expect the government to do that again this year, even though they've already grabbed \$300 million from the reserves, as indicated in the fall economic statement.

This government talks about restraint, but Ontario's deficit is bigger than all other provinces combined, and they've added \$10 billion in new spending in the past two years. In fact, three other provinces actually turned to surplus this year. Even if you remove those three from the calculation, Ontario's deficit is still larger than all other provinces combined.

Speaker, let's look at what was actually in the public accounts. I refer to page 23 of the public accounts. It talks about balancing the budget and it talks about Ontario's record against deficit targets. Page 23 starts with a chart showing a deficit projection of \$24.7 billion in 2009-10. It still talks about these numbers and it says, "Because of the better-than-planned results ... Ontario's accumulated deficit is \$25 billion lower...." It also says that it's because of "careful financial management." But let's get to an actual Ministry of Finance document that we revealed. You can find that, of course, Speaker, in Focus on Finance.

In one briefing document prepared as "confidential advice to cabinet," senior financial officials repeatedly warned that the economy has not regained full strength. In fact, they refer to this \$24.7-billion deficit. They say that it's a benchmark of projects. It is complete fiction, Speaker.

Here's their quote: It "was never a real expectation" and was a "deliberate" policy to project a "worst-case" outcome. In other words, it was deliberately misleading. They admit that "The path to balance was then drawn from there, assuming a straight-line trajectory," and it was assumed that spending would be constrained to whatever it takes to hit the target. In other words, somebody started with a made-up number—in their own words, "It was never a real expectation"—drew a straight line to zero and said, "These are now our deficit numbers for the years remaining." It's fiction, Speaker, complete fiction in their own public accounts document.

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Let's talk about their next document, the fall economic statement. Despite warnings last year from the Bank of Canada that growth would fall short, this Liberal government ignored those warnings, and as a result, they ended up with a \$500-million revenue shortfall. Only four months after publishing the number, they had to correct it by \$500 million. That's how off these guys' estimates are.

Speaking of warnings, the Auditor General, in her 2014 report, warned the Liberals about the possibility of further credit rating downgrades because of their laissez-faire attitude towards our debt. A week after her report,

Fitch cut the government's rating. Moody's sent a shot across their bow just last week, voicing their doubt about the numbers. In fact, here's the Moody's quote: "Ontario's persistently large deficits, and its tendency to delay the most significant cost-cutting measures towards the latter years of its projected timeline for returning to a balanced budget, increase the risk that the province will be unable to achieve its goal" of balancing by 2017. Speaker, the experts don't believe their numbers and we don't either.

Here's what else the Auditor General had to say on page 5 of the annual report: "Our key commentary in chapter 2 is on Ontario's growing debt burden." She talks about how the government "should provide more information on how it plans to achieve its longer-term objective of reducing its net debt-to-GDP ratio." Remember, when these guys took office, the net debt-to-GDP was 27%. Today, it's forecasted to reach a high of 40.5%.

According to the auditor, "The net debt-to-GDP ratio is a key indicator of the government's financial ability to carry its debt relative to the size of the economy." It's going the wrong way. Our deficits are going the wrong way—\$9 billion, \$10 billion, \$12 billion. The debt-to-GDP is going the wrong way.

We also have once-secret documents from the Ministry of Finance that show the government had a \$4.5-billion gap prior to the 2013 budget that, again, they hid from the public. I will talk about that gap here in their own words. In late February 2013, the Ministry of Finance identified that the government is at least \$3.5 billion off the pace needed to balance the budget. These are in these once-confidential documents that we were able to get out through the gas plant scandal committee, actually. It states that the fiscal gap stems from "existing ministry results-based plans falling short of managing within allocations." In other words, they just spent \$3.5 billion more than they took in. In fact, the number was revised to \$3.6 billion.

When the cabinet was aware of this, they went on a retreat. They went on a retreat, and instead of taking decisive action to reduce this massive hole in their budgeting, cabinet discussions actually resulted in an increase to the shortfall. They ended up with a \$4.5-billion gap.

This is interesting because in a document dated May 2, the day the budget was presented, it shows that the multi-year expense plans remained largely unchanged. That means the government knew when it presented its budget—it said one thing, but knew they were \$4.5 billion worse off. They publicly insisted they were "on track to balance the budget," yet the very day before, they knew they were \$4.5 billion further away from ever balancing the budget. They say one thing, but do the complete opposite.

We haven't even touched the scandalous waste of this government yet, the \$1.1 billion on the gas plants scandal, the \$8 billion in wasted money on infrastructure procurement, the \$1 billion on eHealth, the \$1 billion on Ornge, the \$400 million on the MaRS scandal; and \$1

billion over budget on smart meters, which has led rate-payers to pay billions and billions of dollars to sell off surplus energy.

Speaker, considering the fact that we've got a minute and a half left to talk about the truth versus made-up numbers, I want to talk again, back to public accounts—their own book. Speaker, you keep hearing these guys across the aisle continue to say they got \$640 million less from the feds this year. But their own public accounts document of 2013-14, on page 70, shows us that the actual money received from the federal government was \$21.661 billion. In 2013-14, a year later, the actual was \$22.277 billion. You hear from them that they got \$640 million less, but the truth, the actual fact from their own Ministry of Finance—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: How can you say it's not true? It's right here on page 70. You got \$22.277 billion. That's more than \$21.661 billion.

I know they don't know anything about math, Speaker. We hear that week after week. They make up numbers. I tell you: They can make up all the numbers they want, but the facts are here. They told us one thing, and the truth is in print. They were off by a billion and a half. They actually got \$600 million more.

For all the evidence of negligence and incompetence I have just listed, we have absolutely no faith in any of the estimates numbers, that any of them at all will be accurate when next year's public accounts are released.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I really just want to raise the issue around where the funding went this year, where it didn't go and, actually, why we're in this position.

I do want to point out that from last year's budget, the so-called progressive budget that is very much an austerity budget, there are 6% reductions in every ministry—it's in your budget—except for health care, education, post-secondary, children, social services and the justice sector.

I remember when Mike Harris brought in 5% cuts in every ministry. I remember thousands of people out on that front lawn. Perhaps you'll remember it as well, because you may have been here. I think they lit an effigy of him on fire when they made 5% cuts. This government has 6% cuts in every ministry, and the way it was reported afterward was really interesting, I'm sure you'll agree. The media deemed it an austerity budget after the fact.

What's going to be interesting with the supply motions in these various ministries going forward, quite honestly, is that this is not sustainable. This government is making decisions around funding, and their priorities are completely out of whack. We've talked about a culture of wellness and well-being in the health care sector, around early intervention and prevention, which is a smart investment that they refuse to listen to. The alternative financing procurement process needs to be examined. You should pay attention to the Auditor General.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about concurrence in the estimates. I'm proud, for a number of reasons. Obviously, this is an important debate, but I'm also proud because I have the privilege of working as parliamentary assistant to the President of the Treasury Board. We have a chance to work through the finances of the province on a daily basis. So I'm proud to speak to this very important component of the debate here in this Legislature.

We just heard from a number of members opposite about the importance of focusing on facts. I don't want to spend a lot of time there, but I do want to mention a few quick items, if I may. The member opposite from the PC caucus talked about the federal government. The fact is that Ontario receives \$11 billion less than it pays to the federal government. That is a fact.

The other piece: He talked a lot about economic growth, and I just want to address one issue here. I was just provided with a document from the member for Ottawa-Orléans, prepared by the Royal Bank of the Canada, that I think is quite interesting. I won't go into the details, but ultimately, what it talks about is that they are projecting that Ontario will lead GDP growth among all provinces in Canada. That's the kind of economic planning and outlook that I think we need to be talking about, and those are the facts that we should be focused on.

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Mr. Speaker, a number of us here in this Legislature are relatively new. I just want to take a minute to give some quick background, for those of us in the Legislature, but also for the folks at home who are watching, particularly my constituents in Etobicoke Centre, on what it is that we're debating here, what the concurrence in estimates means.

Concurrence really represents the Legislature's approval for the estimates for a fiscal year. In this case, we're actually discussing the concurrence for the 2014 fiscal year. Concurrence is required for all ministries and offices that have been selected for review by the Standing Committee on Estimates. Estimates of ministries and offices not selected by the committee are deemed concurred by the Legislature. In this case, the committee selected 10 ministries and offices for review, and we've had debate on a number of those already.

On November 27, 2014, the Standing Committee on Estimates filed its report on its review of these estimates with the assembly, and so the assembly's concurrence on estimates, which we are debating today, represents the approval of these selected ministries' and offices' estimates.

The Supply Act, which many in this Legislature know about and some of my constituents would know about as well, would be introduced following orders in concurrence in estimates and, if passed, would represent the final statutory authority for spending by the government and this assembly.

Today's discussion and the ultimate vote are really important, because they're important steps in approving government spending for the past fiscal year, which actually ends later this month.

I just want to take a moment, as we're talking about the Ministry of Finance, to talk about and remind members where we are in the fiscal cycle. Estimates for the government ministries and offices, volume 1, were tabled in the Legislature on July 7, 2014, and volume 2, for legislative offices, was actually tabled earlier today.

The estimates set out a comprehensive account of the government's intended expenditures for the fiscal year and include details of the spending plans that were presented in our government's 2014 budget. As we near the end of this fiscal year, we'll soon be introducing the Supply Act, should concurrence in estimates be reached. So today's concurrence in estimates discussion is really important, as I said at the beginning, because it's required to move forward in finalizing the review of estimates that has taken place.

The Supply Act is required every fiscal year, to provide the final approval and legal authority for all spending for the year. It does not seek any new spending, but it does authorize expenditures as reflected in the estimates. The reason this debate is so important is because today's concurrence in estimates must be obtained before the Supply Act can be introduced.

This act, if passed, would constitute our final authorization by the Legislature of the government's spending program for this fiscal year and give the government the authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments, the commitments that the people of Ontario voted for when they elected this government. That includes spending on a range of important priorities, including health care, education, supporting our most vulnerable citizens, and growing the economy. That's why reaching concurrence in estimates, again, is so important.

I'd like to talk a little bit, as we're talking about the estimates for finance, about how the Ministry of Finance's work, particularly in fiscal planning and economic planning, has impacted Ontarians over the past year.

On July 14, the government passed the Ontario budget. The budget laid out a plan for Ontario, as you know, Mr. Speaker, with support for job creation and a more secure future for our province and our people. The government's plan did a range of things. One of the things that I think is so important, as we think about what that plan did, was what it did to support our economic growth and job creation.

I mentioned earlier how some economists are already predicting that Ontario will have some of the strongest growth in Canada, amongst the Canadian provinces, in the coming year. But I'd like to highlight some of the steps that our government has taken, as part of the Ministry of Finance, to do that.

One of the things that the Ministry of Finance has done is it created a 10-year economic plan in the last budget. That provides the tools for Ontario to seize opportunities to grow the economy and be competitive on

the global stage. Of course, we all know that there's fierce competition for global investments, but to help secure the investments, one of the things the Ministry of Finance has done is ensure that we have a competitive tax system. We have to make sure that our taxes are competitive so that we can attract investment to our province.

The other parts of this plan are that we reduced energy costs for business; we cut red tape, which is so important and something that I hear a lot about in my constituency; and we provided targeted investments to support businesses, particularly in key sectors where we know that there are job opportunities, where businesses will invest and create jobs for all Ontarians. This is, of course, a key component. Job creation is one of those key components that were part of the budget and part of the work of the Ministry of Finance and funded by those estimates.

The other thing I'd like to mention is part of that fiscal process and what was done not just in the past, but into the future. We talked about job creation in the past and going forward, and I've talked about economic growth going back and into the future, but I also want to talk about the fact that we're not only making a difference in the lives of citizens today, but we're also improving the futures of our children and grandchildren. We're doing that through a range of measures, and I'll just take a couple of minutes to refer to what I'm talking about.

First of all, to help accommodate population growth and the demands on infrastructure that come with it, the Ministry of Finance called for and planned for investments of \$130 billion in public infrastructure over the next 10 years. I know that our Minister of Transportation, who is here with us today, is leading that process; I'm incredibly pleased with the work he's doing, and proud of the work he's doing on behalf of our government.

Of that investment that the Ministry of Finance laid out, \$29 billion is dedicated funding for public transit, highways and other priority infrastructure projects across our province. This will impact people in every riding across Ontario, and will of course, if I think about my riding of Etobicoke Centre, help to address congestion—particularly, in part, in the GTA and in the Hamilton area—through investments in roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

This is something that people in Etobicoke Centre speak to me about regularly. When I think about the priorities I hear from my constituents, this is one of the issues that they talk about a lot, this issue of making sure that we're continuing to invest for the future in building the infrastructure that we need to support our economy and quality of life. This is all part of the Ministry of Finance's fiscal plan.

To finance that, what the Ministry of Finance has done is, they moved forward on a plan to unlock the value from sale of our shares of General Motors and certain other real estate assets that we have. That's a key function of the Ministry of Finance, and something that's part of the work that the ministry has done to support that long-term plan to support Ontarians into the future.

The other thing I want to mention as part of the Ministry of Finance's work is the launch of the green bond program. This is also just an example. On its own, it's one measure, one piece of the puzzle, but what I do know is that there was strong demand for the first issue of those bonds, with orders approaching \$2.4 billion from investors in Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia. What this does is, it signals the confidence of investors in Ontario, the fact that people are willing to buy these bonds and support the infrastructure plan that the Minister of Transportation and others are leading in our government.

I've talked about the importance of positioning Ontario for long-term success. Obviously as a government we have a responsibility to support people in every stage of our lives, and that is what this government has been doing for many years and will continue to do. I mention this because I think that, as we think about what the Ministry of Finance's role is, the focus tends to sometimes be very much on fiscal affairs; fiscal affairs are obviously a critical component of what the ministry does, but it's also about fiscal planning and planning for our future.

We talked about transportation. I've talked about job creation. Another piece is poverty reduction. Of course, we all know that the Poverty Reduction Strategy is an important component of the fiscal plan, something that the Ministry of Finance has collaborated with other ministries on to put together. Since launching the Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2008, about 47,000 children and their families were actually lifted out of poverty, and many others were prevented from falling into poverty in the past six years, something that I'm very proud of—and that I know many members on this side are very proud of.

This year alone, the Ministry of Finance allocated more than \$1 billion in the Ontario Child Benefit, and that budget included \$15 billion in funding for children's social services. I think these are all important investments, all important components of the fiscal plan, and all important elements of what the Ministry of Finance does through the estimates that we're talking about today.

The other thing that I'd like to mention is something that comes up a lot in my riding of Etobicoke Centre: the issue of housing. The ministry allocated \$16 million over three years to create about 1,000 new supportive housing spaces and related supports to help Ontarians living with mental health issues and addictions. I hear a lot about mental health issues in my community, and our government and the Ministry of Finance have responded through their fiscal planning framework.

The other thing the Ministry of Finance has done is provided health benefits for children and youth in low-income families to ensure that they have access to services not covered by publicly funded health care, like prescription drugs, vision care and mental health services—again, issues that I hear about regularly from my constituents. I wanted to highlight these as some of the outcomes that come from the fiscal planning process that the Ministry of Finance is responsible for.

When I think about commitments to the future and supporting Ontario in the future—our economy—one of the things the Ministry of Finance has done is that they have also committed significant funds to ensure that we're supporting some key priorities of this government that the people of Ontario elected us to support. A couple of those are, of course, education and health care. These are things that come up in my riding frequently. I know they come up in all our ridings frequently.

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In my community we have one of the largest, if not the largest, percentage of seniors of any riding in the province, and so investments in health care and particularly in community care are so important. Community care, of course, can provide better quality care for seniors, but what it also does is give a reprieve to families. That's one of the things that I heard about a lot in my community: how important it was that we continue those investments in community care. That's one of the things that the Ministry of Finance has done through its fiscal planning.

The other piece that I'd like to mention is the investments that have been made in education. We have our Minister of Education here with us today, and I know that she's doing excellent work in trying to make sure that we're allocating funds to strengthening education. I know that there's a range of aspects that the Ministry of Finance estimates have allowed the Ministry of Finance to plan for in education, things like critical thinking, problem-solving—these are all important things that the ministry has planned for.

Mr. Speaker, what I wanted to lastly touch on was an issue that comes a lot in my community: the issue of making sure that we're getting value for money and managing our fiscal health. I'm proud to be working with the President of the Treasury Board on that and I'm happy to say that we're working towards a goal of eliminating the deficit by 2017-18, in a way that's fiscally responsible but also fair to the people of Ontario and responsible. There's a number of components to that. Of course, I don't have time to talk about them all now, but I just want to highlight some of the things that Minister Matthews spoke to recently when she was talking about how we're doing that.

First of all, we need to make sure that everyone is paying their fair share of taxes. That's a critical function of the Ministry of Finance.

The second thing is to make sure we're maximizing the value for government assets—again, a key responsibility of the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with others.

Finally, we've launched Program Review, Renewal and Transformation, something I'm proud to be working on with Minister Matthews. That's fundamentally new approach to how we budget, to how we manage the taxpayers' dollars. Basically, we're looking at every program within government, every line item, and looking to make sure we get a maximum value for taxpayers' dollars. When I think about the issues that came up in the campaign for me, that come up day to day with my

constituents, this is one of the key issues they raised with me: "Please make sure you're working to make sure we're getting value for taxpayers' dollars." That's a key responsibility of the Ministry of Finance, and that's why these estimates are so important to me, because the estimates that we're talking about approving today support that kind of planning, support that kind of work for the betterment of the people of Ontario.

Just to conclude, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind members of the importance of concurrence in the estimates that we're discussing today. Receiving concurrence would allow the Supply Act to be introduced and provide final spending authority for the fiscal year that is coming to a close.

This is not about approving new spending; it's about providing authority for the government to finance its programs and honour its commitments. It's about approving spending on important priorities like schools, hospitals and income support. I urge all members to support concurrence in the estimates so that spending on important public services that the people of Ontario depend on can be approved.

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

I recognize the member for Sudbury for his maiden speech in the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to speak to the government estimates, specifically government order number 13, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance.

However, before I get into this debate, I hope you'll indulge me, as is tradition in this place. This is my inaugural speech in this great chamber as the MPP for Sudbury. I'd like to take a little time to acknowledge the people of Sudbury who put their trust in me to come back here and be their voice for them once again, and a few people who helped me get here as well.

I think all of us are here, no matter which party we represent, and we all know that we couldn't do this without the support of our families. Well, it's the same for me. There is absolutely no way I could have done this without the support from my wife and two daughters, Trinity and Thea. My wife and two daughters were my rock throughout this whole campaign. As long as I knew they were good, I was good. While all of us politicians are very used to the back-and-forth of politics—we build a skin for it, as I say—many forget that our families also have to deal with this back-and-forth as well. While many of us might find that easy to deal with, it is extremely difficult for some of our families. That's why I want to take the time to thank my wife, Yolanda, and my two young daughters, Trinity and Thea, for their unwavering support.

Mr. Speaker, a funny story: During the run-up to the by-election and then during the by-election, my wife was extremely busy at work. She's on many community organizations. One of the things that's very popular in my household is Theatre Cambrian. My wife was in rehearsals for this play throughout. It's called No Body

Like Jimmy, and it's a play about the election of a state congresswoman in which my wife plays the lead role, the congresswoman. There's nothing like giving my wife first-hand experience to bring to this role, participating in a by-election. We had great opportunities and some fun stories to share. Hopefully, she'll be able to take this with her when the show premieres in April.

But my wife not only has a full-time job and gives back to the community; she also has to look after my two daughters quite a bit, driving them to swimming, dancing, you name it. Those are the things our partners do while we're here. As I mentioned Theatre Cambrian, something that is also very important to my family and my two daughters, I should mention that my two daughters just finished performing in The Who's Tommy. I know I'm a little biased, but my two daughters actually had some phenomenal performances in that, so I just wanted to acknowledge them for that great work.

There were so many people who were involved in that production. I should mention that all of them were volunteers and that these people volunteer their time to give back to their community. I think it's the same with election campaigns. Everyone in this House knows well that campaigns are also not possible without strong performances and strong teams of dedicated and loyal volunteers. I was lucky to have a very dedicated and loyal team. I'm filled with gratitude for every hour they put in, for every door they knocked on and for every call they made, because this by-election wasn't easy.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you've ever been involved in a by-election, but they're quite unique. I have to tell you, having a by-election in Sudbury is unique, but having a by-election in Sudbury in January and February is even more unique. There's nothing like getting outside and knocking on doors in minus 38 degrees Celsius. So to the core of my team and to all of the volunteers, I want to say thank you for everything you did in this campaign. I want to say thanks for being engaged in the political process and for believing in me and what we want to do for the people of Sudbury and for the people of this great province.

I also want to thank the other candidates. They all brought forward some great ideas, and without them we couldn't have had such a great by-election and such great debates. I also want to recognize the Progressive Conservative candidate, Paula Peroni, who ran a second time after beating cancer. I think we all need to give her a huge round of applause.

As well, I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to thank my father for his unwavering support. I should mention that during this campaign, my father celebrated his 101st birthday. We were lucky enough to have the Premier drop by for some birthday cake and to wish him well on his 101st birthday.

Interjection: How old are you, Glenn?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: And yes, I'm looking around and I know most people are now doing the math in their heads, as my colleague was just doing over here. I'm 45 years old. That means my father was 56 when I was born.

His friends used to joke often that he was the only person they knew who was getting Old Age Security and the baby bonus at the same time.

People my age don't get to hear about the Depression or the Second World War from their grandfathers, let alone their fathers. I'm thankful to still have him around to give me some advice and to share his perspective. I get his perspective often. Even if it's something great that we can do or something that's not so great, I'm just honoured to be able to have my father around to share those stories with me.

Also, just six days from today would have been my mom's 88th birthday. We lost her just over five years ago, and there isn't a day that goes by where I don't think about her. But I still want to thank her for instilling in me the values of family, hard work and dedication to a cause. That is something she always shared with me and my three sisters, Vicky, Irene and Dee Dee, which we then share and pass down to our families as well.

It's the history of family that is quite important to each of us, as it makes us who we are, and it's because of the history of this great place, this Legislature, that I stand here today with humility. I'm very conscious of the history in these walls, Mr. Speaker, and I have a strong commitment to live up to the expectations of those people of Sudbury who have placed their trust in me and sent me here.

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As I stand here, I can see the tremendous opportunities that are present in my riding of Sudbury, northern Ontario and Ontario. If I look at my great riding of Sudbury, the opportunities are endless, from research and development, innovation, science, research, forestry, mining, and tourism, just to name a few. We also have the great institutions of Laurentian University, Collège Boréal and Cambrian College; the president and vice-president of Cambrian College are here with us today. Thanks for joining us. I also should mention that I am a graduate of Cambrian College and very proud of that as well.

Mr. Speaker, under the guidance of this Premier, this government is building on Ontario's strong economic fundamentals and outpacing the US, the UK, and the Great Lakes states in job creation. We've seen that as well in Sudbury. Sudbury's economy is again strong, and it's showing its strength as the unemployment rate dropped 3.2% from a recessionary high of 9.3% to 6.1%, below the national average.

As I went door to door, many of the people of Sudbury shared their positive responses with the way our economy is unfolding, and within these government estimates is just the start of that. Many have spoken to me about doing more. I know that our government will do that.

Many small business owners in my community like our plan for growth and for keeping our recovery on course to ensure we can create more opportunities for them and for all of Ontario. Our economy will continue to move forward with a steady, balanced approach, and that will create jobs not only in Sudbury but right across the province. And we will do this by investing in skills

and training. This will help the people of Ontario get good jobs and succeed at work. We are investing in them, from their first job to their next job. We're going to invest in transit and transportation. This will help reduce congestion and protect our environment. We're going to invest in infrastructure; we'll build more and renovate more schools, hospitals and roads. Specifically on financial investment in infrastructure, this government has already committed \$26.7 million to build Maley Drive in my city—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Great project.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: It is a great project—along with \$1 billion to complete the four-laning of Highway 69. Not only does this make our roads safer, it also creates hundreds of jobs and changes the perspective of Sudbury's economy to the businesses in the south of this province, as then we will be connected to the 400 series of highways. And of course, investing in strategic partnerships with business in order to attract investment and compete in a global economy.

We're seeing those investments already, Mr. Speaker. Ontario is first in North America when it comes to foreign direct investment. Our government is partnering with businesses, large and small, in Sudbury and across the province. For example, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund has approved over \$148 million in funding for close to 900 different projects, leveraging nearly \$600 million from the private sector, which shows that our economic plan is working in communities across Ontario, including Sudbury. A good example of that is that Sudbury is home to Ontario's newest mine, Vale's Totten Mine. It is the first mine to open in Sudbury in over 40 years. It represents an investment of \$760 million, and by the time it ramps up to full production, 200 more people will have a job.

And let's not forget the investment of the Clean AER Project—more investment—and Glencore Xstrata and its Nickel Rim operations. Just these investments alone are not only helping Sudbury's economy but Ontario's economy as well.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Tell us more.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I will. Thank you very much.

It's many of the small and medium-sized business owners I talked to during the campaign I think of when I'm speaking here. They talk about how we're seeing growth in many sectors and how others need a little bit more help. I think of the small business owner like Tay Butt, who started a small software company that now has orders for his software from all over the province. Querney business supply has been around our city for decades and is continuing to grow. Dalron Construction: John and Ron spoke to me about how they want to continue to see our city develop and how this government's continuing investments in infrastructure, transit and health care will make Sudbury and Ontario even stronger.

I can think of the 17,000-plus men and women who work in the mining supply and services sector in Sudbury. They all work for small and medium-sized enterprises that are making a difference, not only by creating good-

paying jobs for thousands, but investing in our community—through charitable events, for example.

Just this past weekend, I saw the Grossi family out at an event to raise money for a local charity. Not only do they own and operate Anmar Mechanical, Technica Mining and many, many others; these people also find the time to give back with more than just dollars, but also with their time.

That is why many of these great businesses in my riding of Sudbury applaud our government's actions when it comes to the economy. For example, the business education tax reductions have been accelerated and fully implemented for northern Ontario businesses. Businesses in my riding have benefited from a BET cut of \$8.6 million or an average cut of 26.2% based on current estimates.

So it is clear, in the by-election, that the issues of jobs, growth and maintaining our current course for recovery were a priority for the voters of Sudbury. The people of Sudbury liked our 10-year economic plan. Many of those initiatives start with the government estimates that we're talking about today. It is our plan that will provide the tools Ontario needs to seize the opportunities in changing the economy, starting with \$130 billion in infrastructure investments.

Interjection: Amazing.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: It is amazing, Mr. Speaker.

It's this government that sees the opportunities in the Ring of Fire. That is why our government is taking a smart, sustainable and collaborative development approach in the Ring of Fire, which demonstrates another example of our government's strategic approach to realize the multi-generational economic component of this project. Our government has established a development corporation that will accelerate infrastructure development and provide a business structure for decision-making. That is why we are calling on the federal government to partner with us through this development corporation to build the vital infrastructure for this region, which will not only benefit northern Ontario and cities like my riding of Sudbury, but all of Ontario. Our government is setting tangible benchmarks so we can drive this opportunity, worth \$60 billion, for generations to come.

I have had the opportunity now to sit in both this House and, for over six years, in the House of Commons, representing the good people of Sudbury in both capacities. I have to say that the honour of such a role never diminishes on me, ever. To be able to stand in this place and talk about government estimates, to debate ideas and come up with solutions to make my riding and our great province better for all, is something I never take for granted.

As my inaugural speech in this place slowly comes to its conclusion, first off, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me some leeway today to veer off the debate topic a little bit; to my honourable colleagues in this place for being able to listen to my speech and give me some encouragement, thank you to all; to the people of

Sudbury for giving me their trust once again and voting me into this place; to my family, friends, and volunteers who gave of their time, thank you. Truly, Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to serve, and I look forward to the question-and-answer period, if that exists.

Merci, monsieur, et bonne chance à tous. Merci.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Just a second; sorry. I've been informed that you've already spoken on this particular debate.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No. I've been informed that you've already spoken on this particular round of the estimates debate.

The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to the concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance. I would like to begin by saying that I believe that we're taking a balanced approach to our economy, limiting spending but also investing in those things that our families depend on. I think, as members of the Legislature, we all recognize that there's more than the ledger sheets we're talking about today. Those are the ledger sheets that are in the families that we represent collectively. When we're talking about issues of how we go forward, we have to make sure that those things that we came together to do for them are there for them. I do believe that we need to take a balanced approach.

1530

I would like to remind members on the other side, specifically the member from Nipissing, that as my colleague from Etobicoke Centre mentioned earlier, we give \$11 billion more into Confederation than we take out. So I think it's incumbent upon us to make sure that we keep an eye on those things that are important to families.

I would like to thank the member from Timmins–James Bay for enlightening me as to the thinking of the third party last spring in terms of what was going on. His recognizing the party to his right as a progressive party—I'm not sure we'd all agree with that on this side of the House.

But most of all, what I'd like to do today is welcome the member from Sudbury. I was impressed by his maiden speech. I had the opportunity to spend some time with him at minus 38. It was a very enjoyable experience. I know that he is passionate about his community and that he's focused on those things that are important to families.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to have the opportunity to follow a number of my colleagues on all sides of the House here this afternoon with respect to discussing and debating the estimates of the Ministry of Finance. I say that, of course, Speaker, as someone who, as you mention, cur-

rently serves as the Minister of Transportation, but in my first two years, almost, in this Legislature I actually had the privilege of serving as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

I've listened really closely to the all of the debate and discussion here this afternoon, but I find it circumstantially interesting, I suppose, to have had the chance—

Interjection.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —yes, I might have just made that word up; I'm not quite sure, but it's now on the record—to follow the new member from the riding of Sudbury and also to immediately follow the current member from Ottawa South. If there's one thing that the three of us have in common, it's that we are in fact individuals who have the privilege of representing our respective communities in this place as a result of by-election results. And of course, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who stood in her place a couple of minutes ago and tried to say something into the record, Speaker, something that I believe was going to be interesting and complimentary to the member that spoke right before her—I won't put words in her mouth. It's interesting that all four of us, in fact, are in this Legislature as a result of successful by-election campaigns.

I couldn't help but listen very closely to the newly minted member from Sudbury. I also had the opportunity, like my colleague from Ottawa South, to be in Sudbury to see first-hand why things like the financial plan that has been brought forward by the Ministry of Finance over the last couple of years has had, continues to have and will have such relevance for a community like Sudbury, whether we're talking about being able to balance the books by 2017-18 so that we can continue to invest in health care, in infrastructure and in transit and transportation.

I know, having listened very closely to our new colleague from Sudbury talk about his family and talk about his young children—he knows this because of the time we spent together in Sudbury—as a person myself who has two young children, it is so important for those of us who are serving on this side of the House to continue to build this province up, to continue to move the province forward, and to continue to work with the Minister of Finance and the Ministry of Finance to make sure that, as we balance our books by 2017-18, as the Premier has said many, many times, that we don't do it in a manner that ignores or puts at risk those who require our support as a government. It's why we're investing in that crucial infrastructure, to create jobs and also to create the physical spaces and the physical infrastructure that we need as a province to continue to grow.

I want to congratulate the member from Sudbury in particular for his eloquent comments. I know he will continue to provide exemplary leadership for his community. It has been my pleasure to add my voice to this afternoon's discussion and debate.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to add my voice, along with some of my colleagues, to talk about estimates. Ministry of Finance information is being forwarded to us this afternoon as we look at this particular issue.

I do want to comment on comments that were made by my new colleague, the member for Sudbury. He and I have had some very interesting chats in the past couple of weeks since he joined us here in the House. In his maiden speech he talked to us about the economy, in particular, in Sudbury, and that they have a lower than average unemployment rate, at 6.1%, which is very impressive. He also talked about the potential for the Ring of Fire earning this province \$60 billion; yes, that's with a B. I think this speaks to Ontario's very progressive budget that we introduced, and that I know he believes in.

We've had very interesting chats, also, not just about the Sudbury economy but everything from the kind of contribution he wants to make here to the House right down to where he can buy shower rings in the area. I hope you got your shower rings.

I think that you will be a very effective addition to the House with the knowledge you bring, not only for your riding but for all of Ontario, and we look forward to the contributions that you make in supporting us in helping to build up Ontario. Welcome to the House. We are very much enriched by the contribution you will make to our party.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Frankly, I was delighted to be here this afternoon to hear the maiden speech of Mr. Thibeault, the new member from Sudbury, Ontario. Of course, he does follow in the footsteps of previous MPPs from the great riding of Sudbury: Mr. Cimino, who was here for short period of time but certainly made a contribution during the time he was here, and I know that he made a great contribution in the city of Sudbury prior to that. Of course, prior to that my colleague the honourable Rick Bartolucci served Sudbury so extremely well from 1995 until 2011.

Mr. Speaker, we should always remind ourselves that when you serve in public life, you really do stand on the shoulders of others. Mr. Thibeault will be standing on the shoulders of others from Sudbury and throughout northern Ontario who served previously. He articulated extremely well his vision of what he will be doing here at Queen's Park and for the great people of Sudbury over the next number of weeks and months. I know that in his case he'll be here for years, with his kind of background, his kind of passion and his kind of dedication.

We also talked about estimates for the Ministry of Finance. Contained in those, of course, are estimates dealing with our very aggressive infrastructure program in the province of Ontario. We just announced—I got a note today from the wonderful people from Parry Sound, represented so well by the member across the aisle from Parry Sound–Muskoka—that we'll be building a new bridge in that community through the Community Infra-

structure Fund, something they have anticipated for quite a while. You know, that's opposition, a third party and government working together to deliver that new bridge for the wonderful people and community of Parry Sound.

We know that the member from Sudbury will be delivering many bridges and roads for the wonderful people in Sudbury. We look forward to joining him for great events in Sudbury, Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

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

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote is being requested, and it will be stacked at the end of this afternoon's debate.

Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Debate?
1540

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's sad that I have so little time to respond to the inaugural speech from the member for Sudbury, but I would like to mention that I am accustomed to the politics of by-elections. I completely concur that family and friends, obviously, provide the support that we need to do the important work that we do here.

It was good that the member from Sudbury mentioned the other candidates in the by-election. Certainly, Paula Peroni is a long-time friend, and we were very proud of Suzanne Shawbonquit, of course. We will elect an aboriginal woman to this House one day. It will happen.

It is the supply motion, so it was a strange place to have this inaugural speech, but I commend him on it. Of course, I look forward to working with the member from Sudbury to get that PET scanner that has long been promised by this government—working together to strengthen the health care of the people of Sudbury.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being requested, it will be stacked to the end of this afternoon's debate.

Time allocated to the debate on concurrences in supply having expired, I'm going to seek a motion for each of the remaining ministries and offices not yet moved.

I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of

Aboriginal Affairs. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being requested, it will be stacked to the end of this afternoon's debate.

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I move concurrence in supply for the Office of Francophone Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply for the Office of Francophone Affairs. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote is being requested. It will be stacked to the end of this afternoon's debate.

Again, I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Consumer Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Consumer Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote having been requested, it will be stacked to the end of this afternoon's debate.

Recorded votes having been demanded on certain motions for concurrence in supply, call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have received a notice from the chief government whip asking that the votes on concurrences in supply be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes. So ordered.

Votes deferred.

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 26, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 49, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 49 at second reading, we left off at the point of questions and comments on speeches by several

government members, including Mr. Delaney. He has then the opportunity to respond—or, I guess, to have the round of two-minute questions and comments, and then we would look to him to respond.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to provide a couple of moments of questions and comments. I think we've had a very good debate on supply, and now we're getting ready to debate Bill 49. I know I am looking forward to the debate. I know we're going to be having a number of speakers as well.

But I just get worried with some of the efforts that the government did last week to try to restrict debate. In the previous session, they would table closure motions after closure motions. They were a government by closure and by restriction of debate. I was very discouraged with some of the decisions—I don't want to speak badly of some Speaker decisions, but I know we had two bills last week that closed prior to members of our caucus having the opportunity.

I'm glad the government is calling this bill, and I'll be participating in debate. I know there are some sections of the bill that we'd like to have amended in committee, or at least discussed in committee. We're quite supportive of the spirit and intent of this bill.

As most of you know, Bill 49 was presented in the last session of Parliament as well. I know it's a big issue in my riding, because the median age of a worker in Leeds–Grenville is about six years older than the Ontario average. I know the importance of groups like the Leeds and Grenville Immigration Partnership, which has worked diligently with job creators to try to fill the skills gap.

But I know that because of this government's disastrous policies, so many of our young people have gone to the western provinces, provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan. At one point, I had all three of my sons in the province of Alberta, because there were no job opportunities here in the province.

Ontario was once the leader, and I think we need to get some policies back in place to make us the leader again.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Our critic, Peggy Sattler, will be addressing this at greater length in a few minutes, but I wanted to make a few comments about the bill. Obviously, there are some parts of this bill that may be seen as a step in the right direction, but there are still very substantial issues that remain unaddressed.

There is no certainty that Ontario will be able to set its own targets in regard to recruiting immigrants. Given the critical need for immigrants to keep our economy strong and growing, this lack of power could well be a substantial problem.

There's nothing that guarantees that the federal government will respect this legislation and will actually assist Ontario in meeting its goals. That's a substantial issue.

The bill doesn't address the long-standing problems of ensuring that highly trained immigrants have their credentials recognized. I have to say that when my parents came here in the early 1950s, my father had been a licensed mechanic back in England, but he couldn't get any recognition for his skill and had to work for years at very low wages before he could finally have his credentials recognized.

In 2006, when I ran in the by-election to be a member of this Legislature—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I was happy you came that day.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Why, thank you, Ms. MacLeod—I had the opportunity to talk to many in the immigrant community who were still facing exactly the same problems that my father had faced in the 1950s.

Frankly, if this bill is not going to move us forward on that issue, it's going to result in an ongoing waste of human potential and an ongoing underperformance of the Ontario economy that isn't using the full skills and training that newcomers can bring to this province.

The bill is silent on a number of other issues, like housing for newcomers. It may be a small step forward, but there are many other steps that have to be taken.

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 49.

Certainly, it's tough to think of the province of Ontario or it's tough to think of the country of Canada without thinking about immigration. It's a country that has been built by our First Nations, to begin with, but then, from there, by the European settlement that followed and then the Asian settlement we're seeing today.

1550

People move to Ontario to become successful. They move to Canada to become successful. My own family moved here in the mid-1960s, when I was 11 years of age, and quite frankly, they moved here because things in Britain weren't going very well and things in Canada were going extremely well.

We moved to Toronto. I don't think there was any place we actually considered moving to other than the city of Toronto, and soon we settled down there. At that time, it was a land of opportunity. It was a place to come to where the adults themselves could do well and the kids could do well.

Along the way, as a society, we've learned more about immigration. We've learned how we can accommodate new people in our society in a much more flexible way that takes full advantage of the talents and the potential that they bring from other countries.

When we find out certain things and we make certain changes, if we're adaptable, in the legislation that governs immigration, we can actually fulfill the dreams of the people who are moving here to make better lives for themselves, but we can also make our province a better place and we can make this country a better place. We know that a strong Ontario means a strong Canada.

Certainly, Ontario is still the province of choice when it comes to people who move here, like we did in the 1960s. That hasn't changed much. When people think of moving to this country, the place they think of starting from, starting their new life, is right here in the province of Ontario.

I'm really pleased to see these changes to the Ontario Immigration Act. It's simply going to make for a better experience for the province of Ontario but also for the immigrants who move to this country.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise in debate of Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. I think our House leader earlier said we are generally supportive of this piece of legislation.

I would remind all members of this assembly that Ontario traditionally was the place in Canada that not only people from across Canada wanted to move to, but people from around the world. They knew when they came here, years ago, decades ago, that they could get a good job, buy a home, pay their mortgage, put their kids through school, put them through university, rely on affordable and sustainable health care and education, and then retire comfortably. That Ontario dream has faded over the last decade, and I think that is key for us to discuss during this conversation.

It's also a place that is losing its population. Our population has been declining. I received that information from my seatmate, Ernie Hardeman from Oxford. I think it's important to bring Ernie up today.

Earlier today, in a tribute to Ernest Côté, we talked about the values, as Ontarians and as Canadians, that we have. It was Mr. Hardeman who reminded me that he lived in the Netherlands at a time when he and his family had lost their freedoms. I think, as Ontarians and as Canadians, we should be very proud that this is a place where people would choose to come.

But as Mr. Hardeman will point out—and one of the criticisms the Progressive Conservative Party has with this legislation, though generally supportive—we're not doing enough to not only attract people to come to Ontario but, once they are here, to provide them with that support and opportunity that they once had, decades ago.

I look forward to continuing debate on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I thank my colleagues from Leeds–Grenville, Toronto–Danforth, Oakville and Nepean–Carleton for their comments.

My colleague from Leeds–Grenville: His comments didn't have a lot to do with either the bill or the Ontario Immigration Act, but I certainly appreciate the spirit in which he offered them.

The member for Toronto–Danforth pointed out how Ontario is still getting a raw deal from the feds in immigration. That's one of the things that this bill is trying to address. Citizenship and Immigration Canada is the single worst-run area in the federal government.

My colleague from Oakville pointed out how the country and our province were built by waves of newcomers, of which he was one, and of which one of my parents was one.

People come here for a new life, a new beginning. They come here to build this country, this province and our communities. They become passionate Canadians, like the member himself, as a matter of fact. He talked a great deal about how Ontario has learned to make immigration a strategic advantage, and this is a key part. In our office in Mississauga, if you call, we're going to serve you completely, fully, in 10 different languages. We use them all.

I also have to say to my good friend from Nepean–Carleton how movingly she spoke this morning about Ernest Côté and to commend her on her remarks, which I thought were timely, sensitive, well-drafted and beautifully delivered. Although that doesn't have a lot to do with what we're talking about, it's something that I did want to say publicly. I actually sent her over a letter.

In the end, I think all three parties are going to support this bill. I think it's now time to give it the best of our consideration, get it to committee and get this thing enacted.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Speaker, before I start debating Bill 49, I want to tell you that I'll be sharing my time with the members from Prince Edward–Hastings and Leeds–Grenville. With that, I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act.

As you know, the federal government has introduced a new Expression of Interest system that helps provinces attract the skilled workers they need and helps connect potential immigrants with jobs. I want to commend them for all the work they've done on that.

For those who don't know, the Expression of Interest program provides governments and Canadian employers access to skilled foreign workers and expedites their entry into Canada for jobs that aren't being filled by the people already in Canada. This program will allow prospective immigrants to indicate their interest in coming to Canada by providing information electronically about their skills, work experience and other attributes. If the individuals meet eligibility criteria, they will be placed in a database so they can be matched with employers who are looking for those skills.

The Expression of Interest program went into effect January 2015, and this bill would put the next step of that program in place for Ontario, including establishing an employer registry.

I expect when the government gets up to speak, they will point out that the Expression of Interest program is already in place, and they will say we should rush this legislation, as was just mentioned, through the House. So before they do that, or any more of that, I would like to point out a few facts.

First, until today, we only had one opportunity for one member of the opposition to actually speak to this bill.

Secondly, although the government often forgets this, they were ones who called the election that killed the previous version of the bill. Following the election, they were the ones who waited until the end of November to introduce this one.

We support the intent of this bill. We believe that we need to do more to attract skilled immigrants to Ontario, to ensure that they, and all Ontarians, have opportunities to succeed here and that this is a place where all parents believe their children can have a bright future. Today that simply is not the case.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be an immigrant. I was born in the Netherlands, and I am one of 15 children. My father was a farmer in Holland, and although he was making a living, he looked at the land available and realized there simply wasn't enough land for his children to have the same opportunities he had. The population density was so high that it would be difficult for his children to get involved in agriculture. So he packed up the whole family—there were only 14 children at the time; one came the other way—and moved us to Ontario, Canada, because he believed it was the land of opportunity.

I just wanted to point out that we were supposed to go—and this is how attractive Ontario was—to Manitoba to help a sugar beet farmer on the farm, because we had so many farmhands that could help. In fact, that's where our train tickets were for, but my father wanted to go to Ontario. So when the train stopped in Woodstock, Ontario, we all got off. Mr. Speaker, people believed that opportunities in Ontario were so great that we were willing to bend the rules to stay here.

Moving to Canada, and to Ontario, was a brave decision for my parents to make. It would have been easier for my father and mother to stay in Holland with their friends and family, but they wanted a better life for their children. I'm grateful to them for making that decision, because otherwise I wouldn't be here today. Neither would my nephew John, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. Welcome to Ontario, John.

Mr. Speaker, when we arrived in Ontario, we didn't know what to expect. Today, people have more resources, like the great website welcometooxford.ca, which helps people choosing to move to my riding. But at that time we had a few surprises. What we had heard, and what we believed, was that Ontario was a place where you could succeed if you worked hard. It was a place where there were opportunities. For many people living in Ontario, that isn't the case anymore, and that reality is going to mean that potential skilled immigrants are going to look at places where the opportunities are better.

1600

One of the things that we need to recognize is that we are competing for skilled immigrants. We are competing with provinces like Alberta, who on their provincial nominee website are able to say, "Alberta's stable economy and innovative business spirit make it an ideal place to work."

And we are competing against other jurisdictions. Just this weekend, there was an article in the *Globe and Mail*

about Germany's strategy to attract more immigrants of working age, because over the next 10 years they anticipate losing 6.7 million working-age people to retirement or to other jurisdictions. It doesn't matter how great our immigration system is if people don't want to come to Ontario.

People who are emigrating today still look for many of the same things that my parents did when they chose their new home. They want a place where their children can have a better life, a place where the government is fair and laws are respected and applied equally to all, and a place where they can succeed if they work hard. Those same values are the reason I'm a Conservative.

When my father chose to come here to Ontario, Ontario was the economic engine of Canada, but today it's a have-not province. Our debt is so large that each man, woman and child in Ontario would have to contribute \$23,000 just to pay it off. Neither of those facts will convince potential immigrants that Ontario is the place where their children can have a better life.

In the government's leadoff speech, it was mentioned that a ministry survey of landed nominees found that 98% of nominees with a job offer were currently working in Ontario. What they didn't mention is that the auditor's report found that the survey's response rate was only 45%, and that the remaining nominees could not be contacted. How many of those people couldn't be contacted because they'd already moved to Alberta or another province where the opportunities were greater?

I know other speakers have already talked about the fact that between 2004 and 2013 Ontario was one of only two provinces that actually saw the number of permanent residents decline. In her recent report, the Auditor General stated, "Only half of Ontario's new immigrants were from the economic class, compared, for instance, to 87% in Saskatchewan, 78% in Manitoba and 68% in Alberta." When potential immigrants look for skilled employment, they must look at the fact that there are more jobs, for higher pay, with less taxes, in Alberta, and now they are also looking at the fact that Ontario is proposing to take an additional 2% of their salary for a pension program.

Ontario should be proud that we can still boast that we are a multicultural province. I've listened to some of the stories that members told when speaking on this bill of emigrating to Canada, or of their parents and grandparents coming here. I think there are many places in the world that would be surprised to learn that immigrants can have that type of opportunity. But when it comes to economic opportunities, the future just doesn't look that bright. If you want to attract economic immigrants, that needs to change.

I think we all agree that Ontario has a skilled trades shortage. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada did a study on this issue that included a survey of over 1,500 employers. They found skill gaps in four sectors that together make up 38% of Ontario's employment: manufacturing; health care; professional, scientific and technical services; and financial industries. Three quarters of the surveyed employers said that skills requirements in their

business had increased over the past decade, and another three quarters said that they will increase further over the next decade. They estimated that the skills gap cost the Ontario economy up to \$24.3 billion in forgone GDP, as well as \$4.4 billion in federal tax revenues and \$3.7 in provincial tax revenues, annually.

In addition, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce found that, depending on the sector being surveyed, between 21% and 52% of employers reported difficulty hiring someone with the right qualifications. Part of the solution is matching training and education with the skills that are needed and reforming the apprenticeship ratios so more of our young people can enter the skilled trades. But the other part of the solution—and this is the part that this bill tries to address—is to attract more immigrants with those skills and ensure that immigrants who come here can use their skills.

Mr. Speaker, this bill takes some small steps towards addressing the problem that unfortunately a number of skilled immigrants face. They arrive here ready to contribute, but their education and qualifications aren't recognized, so they can't work in their field. If we're serious about making Ontario the land of opportunity again and serious about attracting skilled labour, this is a problem the government needs to address.

If you're going to once again become the economic engine of Canada and make Ontario a place that people want to come to, the government has to get serious about solving some of these problems, not point fingers at us because we were elected government in 1995 or the NDP because they were elected in 1990. They can't keep blaming the federal government or municipalities. The people of Ontario expect and deserve better than that.

That leads me to another significant problem with implementing the program. One of the major parts of this bill is putting in place a system that allows Ontario employers to connect with potential immigrants to find skilled labour they need—and that assumes that jobs are available. We support the goal of this legislation, but Ontario faces some significant economic challenges today that are going to make it difficult for this program to work as intended.

This program works for businesses that are expanding and growing. In today's Ontario, many businesses are in fact downsizing or closing their doors. Heinz, Kellogg's, Hershey's, E.D. Smith, CanGro—business after business has shut their doors. All of us have heard from businesses in our ridings that are struggling with the cost of hydro, red tape, taxes and economic challenges. All of us have heard from businesses that have been approached by other jurisdictions with attempts to get them to move. They have been offered reduced taxes, lower energy costs and even free training for their future employees. The proposed pension plan would just be one more thing that drives businesses out of Ontario.

This legislation won't work to help connect potential immigrants with jobs if no one in Ontario is hiring. There are already some questions about how Ontario's immigration program has been working. Again, in her annual

report, the Auditor General published the results of her audit of the provincial nominee program. For those who aren't aware, under the provincial nominee program, provinces and territories can nominate people who meet specific local labour market needs for permanent residence. The auditor found that “between October 2011 and November 2013, about 260 approved files were flagged for follow-up. We reviewed a sample of them and noted that only 8% had” received that follow-up.

She also found that despite public statements “that applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis, certain applications are given priority and processed at least three times faster than non-prioritized files,” including applications where the representative was a former staff member with the program.

The auditor also found that “Employers did not need to attempt to recruit locally for 76% of job offers made to nominee applicants....” That was one of the requirements; 76% were not required to do it.

As well, the auditor discovered problems with staff training, partly caused by the number of temporary or seasonal workers. We know that this is a practice throughout the government. Instead of hiring full-time people, who would show up on the government documents as employees, they hire people on contracts so they can say the number of staff isn't increasing. In this case, the result was improperly trained people making decisions that had a huge impact on people's lives. This decision determines a person or family's future. It's not a responsibility that should be taken lightly or done by someone less qualified just so the government can post reduced staffing numbers.

In this case, it may also have contributed to fraud. During her review, the auditor investigated “allegations about the program's operation and the risk that it was continuing to consider applications from individuals and organizations who were suspected to have been involved with immigration fraud and/or illegal immigration-linked investment schemes.” It seems from her report that when staff working on the program discovered fraud, they weren't willing to tell anyone that there was any, and there was nothing to stop those people from reapplying or acting as representatives for other applicants. According to her report, based on the recommendations from the auditor's office, the ministry “formally referred certain case information to law enforcement in September 2014.”

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One of the things that was particularly concerning to me was that many of her findings had a common thread: When a problem was discovered, it was delayed or buried. Unfortunately, it is typical of this government that when there is a problem, their solution seems to be to hide it or blame others rather than trying to solve it.

I want to share a few quotes from the auditor's report: “For example, in 2013, when the team found that 38% of a sample of foreign-worker nominees who had since become permanent residents were suspected to have misrepresented themselves”—this is a quote from the auditor—“program management requested that the team

not share lessons learned from the results of the investigations with processing staff, thereby missing an opportunity to educate them and enhance due diligence processes.” I want to emphasize a point there: Program management requested that the team not share the lessons learned—nothing could be further from what needs to be done.

The auditor’s report also said: “The ministry delayed formally reporting information relating to potential abuse of the program to the federal government and the proper law enforcement agencies.” We found it and we hid it.

And the quote goes on: “After the ministry’s program integrity team recommended that case information about applicants and applications of concern be referred to outside parties for further work, the ministry took up to 15 months to report this information to the federal government and law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the ministry did not provide vital personal information to them, thereby potentially delaying corrective action against individuals who have been abusing the program.” These are the quotes from the Auditor General. I’m not just here supposing that’s what happened; she found that in her review.

I want to commend the auditor for the work she does. In opposition we sometimes face challenges obtaining the information that we need and having the resources to analyze detailed financial documents, so the work of the Auditor General and her office is essential to ensuring that programs work as intended, that taxpayers receive value for money, and, in the case of organizations like Ornge, that waste and misuse of tax dollars be discovered and stopped.

I’m pleased that the Auditor General chose to use resources of her office to investigate the provincial nominee program, and that the minister has said that some of her concerns are going to be addressed in this bill.

As you know, I’ve asked several times in this Legislature for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ask the auditor to investigate the Housing Services Corp., the organization that all affordable housing providers in Ontario are required to purchase their natural gas and insurance through.

Like Ornge, this organization has set up multiple for-profit subsidiaries. Like Ornge, they’ve seen questionable expenses, such as the current CEO travelling to Europe seven times within 16 months. Like Ornge, we’ve seen questions about salaries. In fact, a Housing Services Corp. salary budget went from \$1.25 million in 2005 to \$7.5 million just seven years later.

During a review of the provincial nominee program, the auditor was able to find the problems so they could be corrected, and we believe that she should do the same for the affordable housing money being diverted by the Housing Services Corp.

I want to ask all members of the government side to help us ensure that affordable housing dollars go to help vulnerable people by asking the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to request the Auditor General to investigate the Housing Services Corp.

Housing, as was mentioned earlier, is also important for immigrants. Without the proper housing, again, we will not attract them.

One of the other things that is missing in this bill is a connection between encouraging immigrants to come to Ontario and ensuring they have the services they need when they get here. This goes beyond settlement services; it’s about services that they expect in their communities, such as schools for their children.

During the ROMA/Good Roads combined conference this week, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of municipalities which are mandated to grow under Places to Grow. Many of the immigrants impacted by this bill will settle in these communities. What I heard was disturbing: One government ministry is telling them they need to expand, but other government ministries are not keeping pace with providing services and funding that they need to accommodate those people.

In one case, the Ministry of Education actually criticized a municipality for growing and told them to stop because they couldn’t keep up with the new schools they needed. I heard from the city of Brantford. They were almost out of development land for homes or businesses. Again, the government has told them to grow, but the city says there’s no land left to grow on. They have asked the government for help in negotiating with the county, but so far it hasn’t happened.

If we’re going to encourage people to come to Ontario, we need to ensure that they can find places to live—a house or an apartment—where there is space in the school for their children and where the local hospital can take good care of them if there is an emergency. That’s the type of planning the government should be doing.

The Ontario my father emigrated to, the one with all those opportunities for his children, isn’t the one we have today. Instead, this government has created an Ontario where red tape and the cost of doing business often prevent those who work hard from succeeding, an Ontario where the government is the subject of multiple police investigations.

Many people know that there is a strong Dutch community in my riding.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, don’t we?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: There is—very strong—and me, too. There is also Italian, Portuguese, Hungarian, Polish, German and many others. In fact, the last census found that in Oxford there were people who spoke 70 different languages. I ask the government to ensure that all those people have the opportunities my father came here for: the opportunity to succeed through hard work, the opportunity to live in a community where the laws are fair and the opportunity to see your children have a better life. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member indicated that he was sharing his time with the member for Leeds–Grenville. The member for Leeds–Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, also the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

I just want to continue in the vein of the member for Oxford. I know that we've indicated—I think we've had one speaker to the bill already in this forum—that there are some concerns. Although there is general support, there are some concerns that we'd like to see dealt with, either through debate or, obviously, through committee. Overall, I think the bill does take some very important steps to align Ontario with some of the federal immigration policy changes. These are critical steps, too, because we know that our province's future economic prosperity is directly tied to our ability to attract the best and the brightest from around the world.

I will say it is a shame that the government has taken so long to introduce these reforms designed to help newcomers get settled in Ontario. However, for reasons I'll get to shortly, while this is good bill, I'm not hopeful that it will actually do a lot to attract newcomers to the province.

As was mentioned, I am sharing the balance of the time with the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. For that reason, I'm going to focus my remarks on Bill 49 and what it means to the people who elected me to the Legislature. I can tell you that although I represent a predominantly rural riding in Leeds–Grenville, in eastern Ontario, this is a bill that promises to make reforms to immigration policy that are just as important to my riding in rural eastern Ontario as to every other corner of the province. That's a point that needs to be made: Too often, when we discuss immigration issues, there is a tendency to think it only matters in Ontario's largest cities and urban areas. That's far from reality. We need to recognize that the talents newcomers have to offer are important in building prosperous futures for businesses and communities in every corner of Ontario, which includes Leeds–Grenville.

We have a proud tradition of welcoming newcomers from around the globe with open arms. These folks have made an indelible mark on our communities, adding to the richness of our culture and our local economy.

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It's no coincidence that one of the signature events in my riding is the annual multicultural festival held every May in the city of Brockville. For more than three decades, thousands have attended this event, which highlights our diversity and the rich tapestry of cultures that make Leeds–Grenville such a wonderful place to call home.

I also think of my good friend Terry O'Reilly, one of the co-owners of Pricedex Software in Brockville. I've had many, many opportunities to tour Terry's company. I can tell you, it's one of the most diverse groups of employees you'll find anywhere in the province. Terry is very proud of this. I think it's a valuable lesson for all MPPs to remember that immigration issues aren't just something that concern members of urban ridings.

Frankly, that's why it's a shame that I suspect we'll see the government soon looking to stifle debate on Bill

49 through closure or through some other means—something they've done with so many, many pieces of legislation. The ability to bring the perspective from all of our ridings to talk about how legislation will impact our communities, our employers and our residents is the reason we're all here.

It diminishes this place when we limit debate on legislation brought forward by the government. It's bad enough when the calls for ending debate come from cabinet ministers and the government House leader. Even in our beginning debate here this afternoon, up until Mr. Hardeman from Oxford and I spoke, we really only had one speaker to this bill and there were already calls, through a prepared text from the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, that debate needs to collapse.

We had the ORPP legislation here last week. We had 19 members in Her Majesty's loyal opposition who were unable to speak to that bill because the government invoked ending the debate. It's disappointing when the government shortchanges constituents from other ridings that don't have the opportunity to speak and allow those voices to be heard.

In the context of today's debate it's also critical that we look at exactly what is happening to immigration trends in our province. We look back over the past decade or so, and there's an obvious trend that is unfolding. In 2001 and 2002, approximately 60% of immigrants to Canada settled right here in the province of Ontario. But from 2003 on, there has been a steady decline. The numbers speak for themselves and they speak very loudly.

The result is that in 2011, Ontario's share of newcomers to this great country was just 40%. That's an incredible decline and it means our province is missing out on everything these newcomers have to offer. So I guess the question is: What happened in 2003 that would have triggered such a decline in the province? Ah, yes. I think I remember: 2003 was the year Dalton McGuinty became Premier and put the wheels in motion on a set of policies and, really, overall management that has ruined our economy and made Ontario a fiscal basket case.

The decline in immigrants seeking a new start in Ontario and the downward slide in our economy under this Liberal government, I suggest, is no coincidence. We know companies want to invest in well-run provinces, and, in fact, so do new Canadians. Just as we're seeing more companies choose to look elsewhere, more and more newcomers to Canada are deciding Ontario just simply isn't worth the risk. Now, I know some of the members don't want to hear this, but as I said, the facts speak otherwise.

I'm not trying to take any cheap shots at the government. I think other members can do that. I just think it's critical in today's context of Bill 49 that we let those statistics speak for themselves. Our caucus, as I've said at the outset, is generally supportive of the bill. There are some good reforms there, but I think in reality it's simply not enough to think we can bring more immigrants to Ontario by working together as legislators. We need to

do more, because the underlying issue is the broken economy.

Immigrants want to settle where they and their families will have the best chance for success, and right now—I know they don't want to hear this—they're not picking Ontario. It's bad news. I mentioned earlier in this bill that I did want to provide some context for Leeds–Grenville, and I want to highlight something.

The most recent Local Labour Market Planning Report for the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board talks about how important this issue is to a rural riding like Leeds–Grenville. Before I begin, I want to put a plug in for Frank O'Hearn and his team at the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board. Frank is the executive director of the organization. I had a chance to meet with him during the winter break. I was troubled to learn that there were some rumblings around his organization's future because of some changes the government is proposing. I'd just like to take this opportunity to remind the government—and in this case, for this organization, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities in particular—about how important this organization is. The work and invaluable information they provide employers and economic development officials in my riding is critical to charting our course in building our economy. While we do need to look at how to become more efficient and spend our resources wisely across government, the minister needs to understand how much value there is in retaining this expertise at the local level.

Back to the board's report and its connection to the debate that we're having this afternoon: Our region's employers are being squeezed for labour supply because of the combination of low population growth and an aging workforce. As an example, the report notes that the median age in Leeds–Grenville is 46.7 years, compared to the Ontario figure of 40.4 years. I should also point out that in eastern Ontario, we're exporting our youth to other provinces, like Alberta and Saskatchewan, where there are simply more opportunities for them to find work. That is also leading to a shortage of skilled labour for employers desperately trying to fill jobs. So it's a huge challenge we're facing, and I know Leeds–Grenville isn't alone.

Immigration, of course, becomes the key to meeting this challenge. As the workforce development board's report states, and I'm going to quote it, Speaker, "There is a low organic population growth which points to a need to attract more international and provincial migrants to the area."

The picture being painted here is that the mismanagement of our economy is a double whammy to employers in Leeds–Grenville. First, the economic climate makes it harder for them to get the edge on competitors—or plants within their company—in other provinces or around the world. Secondly, they're finding it harder and harder to find those skilled employees they need to compete, because newcomers to Canada are choosing provinces other than Ontario. Sadly, Bill 49 is not going to fix that.

To the government, we say: Let's work together, obviously, and get Bill 49 passed, once we've had a chance to have a full debate, not a contracted debate by the government. But let's also give some recognition that this legislation isn't, on its own, the reason we're going to solve the underlying problem of why fewer immigrants are settling in Ontario. I think we'd all agree that that recognition starts with the government tabling a budget with a real plan to create jobs and get Ontario back to fiscal balance. A province where waste, scandal and, frankly, incompetence have come to define its government isn't one in which newcomers are going to decide to make a new life. Until this government wakes up to that fact, I'm afraid we'll continue to struggle to hang on to our own best and brightest, let alone attract from other countries around the world.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll defer to my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings has the floor.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. Thank you for allowing me to pick up where my colleague from Leeds–Grenville ended on Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act.

I do have a lot to add to the debate, and I did have the opportunity just over a year ago, I believe it was, when I was the critic for citizenship and immigration at that time, to bring comments on the first evolution of this bill. But I would like to say that I have had the opportunity for two and a half years or so to hold the role of chair of community outreach for our party, the Progressive Conservative Party. During that time, I've had the opportunity to meet people throughout various communities in Ontario, but particularly here in the GTA, which is the multicultural capital of Canada and quite possibly North America. We have a beautiful mosaic of people living mostly in harmony here in the GTA and across Ontario, and they bring so much to this province's rich cultural history. Of course, it started a long time ago, as we're all immigrants to this country and to this province.

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I have been in this position as chair of outreach for about two years now. We just went through a really interesting time, as the lunar new year is upon us. This is the Year of the Goat, Sheep or Ram; it just depends on which community you are from, but this is supposed to be a rather calm year, according to the moon. The lunar new year says that this is supposed to be a calm year and that there are not going to be that many explosive issues that occur.

Some may argue that there already have been some explosive issues for our government here in Ontario, perhaps in Sudbury with an investigation that's under way there, but I digress.

Last year was the Year of the Horse, and things were supposed to be happening fast. Now we're on to the Year of the Sheep.

I have had the opportunity to meet many people in the Vietnamese community, the Korean community and the

Chinese community here in the GTA. As a matter of fact, a couple of weeks ago, up in our caucus room, we had the opportunity to bring people in from all of those communities and have our own lunar new year celebration. I think a lot of that was the opportunity for us as party members and caucus members to reach out to members of the various communities. They very much understand the fiscal responsibility that we stand for in our party, and the fact that what's happening in the province right now doesn't meet their value system.

They understand that, in order for us to prosper as a community, we have to look after our finances, and we have to be fiscally responsible as a government—something that this government, the Liberal government, has been very abhorrent in accomplishing. Unemployment in Ontario is up around 7%. It's completely unacceptable, and I believe it's now 92 consecutive months that the unemployment rate in Ontario has been higher than the national average—something like that. It's a long, long time.

My friend from Leeds–Grenville just mentioned a few minutes ago the fact that fewer and fewer newcomers are choosing Ontario, and the main reason that they're not coming to Ontario is because there is better opportunity for them to get a job in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. They're prospering in the western provinces. They're going through a little bit of a hiccup right now in Alberta, but there is an opportunity here to grow and create jobs in Ontario, and this government is letting down not just the people who live in Ontario, but the people who want to come to Canada and get a job in Ontario. They're not living up to their responsibilities as a government.

I think it's only fitting, with the miners in town right now, that we bring up the fact that Ontario has slipped from being one of the top mineral-producing jurisdictions in the world down to number 23, and this has all happened because this government has been asleep at the switch. They've been asleep at the wheel for huge projects and huge opportunity, where Saskatchewan has taken advantage of potash; newcomers are coming to Ontario and then heading out to Saskatchewan because there's more opportunity there. Or what's happening out in Alberta in the oil sector: There's the opportunity for them to get jobs in Alberta, so that's where they're going.

Here in Ontario, we've been sitting idle on the Ring of Fire now for 10 years. Nothing seems to be happening, and I know that those who are going to be attending the events with the mining convention that's under way in town, the PDAC convention that's in town right now, are going to be talking about that, because we've been hearing it in our caucus: the fact that Ontario continues to slip, continues to slide down the ratings systems that are out there, and the Ring of Fire, that great opportunity in northern Ontario and James Bay, isn't being seized by this government.

The fact that our province is mired in debt—the province is now approaching \$325 billion in debt. These people who are coming here are educated. They do their

homework. They know where the opportunity is. They see what's happening here in Ontario, and they're choosing to go out west. With \$20 billion of debt added this year alone to a \$12.5-billion deficit that we're dealing with in Ontario, we're not able to look after the infrastructure; we're not able to look after our health care system in this province, because we're paying far too much money—\$11 billion a year—in interest payments on the debt. That's money that's not going into our infrastructure and our health care. The reason that potential newcomers to Canada are choosing the western provinces is quite obvious.

Let's talk about some of the other communities that I've had the opportunity to spend some time with over the last little while. On Saturday, I had the opportunity to join the National Council of Canadian Tamils, the NCCT. They had their big gala up in Scarborough. It was a very well-attended event. All of the political parties at the federal and provincial level and a lot of our municipal counterparts were there. There's a population and there's a community that's growing in Ontario. The Tamil community has come here and they've started businesses. They were telling me on Saturday night that they're not going to be able to grow their businesses in Ontario because of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan that's coming. A lot of them are small business operators. Their businesses don't have a pension plan, so they're going to be exposed to this ORPP scheme that is going to be taking money out of the pockets not only of the employers, but of the employees, as well. They can't afford to live here in this province right now. It's a tax. It simply is a tax, and this is another detractor for people wanting to come to Ontario to live, to set up a business and to have a better opportunity for their families. They were telling me the other night at this dinner that Toronto and the GTA and Ontario were their number one choice when they arrived here but the cost of living in Ontario is getting more and more expensive every day and the opportunity for them to raise their families is becoming more and more difficult with each day that passes. They watch things like the ORPP coming down the pike—and we just rushed through debate on the ORPP here in the Legislature the other day. They're also hearing about things like a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system that's coming. Finally, when the price at the pump starts to go down a little bit, the Ontario government, this Liberal government, wants to slap on a carbon tax or some kind of cap-and-trade scheme that's going to make it more expensive to drive their vehicles, which is going to make it more and more expensive for every product in the province of—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, Speaker, my favourite standing order 23(b)(i)—I'm afraid this has little to do with the subject under discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Well, it's always an opportunity to remind members that their

remarks have to be relevant to the debate. But I hear the member speaking to Bill 49, and he has the floor.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you. Obviously, the member across the way wasn't listening very closely, because we were talking about—the reason that people aren't coming in droves to Ontario like they had been in the past is because this is becoming a less and less desirable place for them to come to because of the cost of living, and the fact that you're talking about slapping carbon taxes and cap and trades and ORPP pension taxes on people is making it even less desirable.

Let's look at some stats: Approximately 51% of immigration to Ontario falls in the economic immigration category. That's the lowest of any Canadian province. I'll tell you that one again: Approximately 51% of immigration to Ontario falls into the economic immigration category. So we're not doing a very good job at attracting those who fill jobs that we need here in Ontario. Fewer and fewer jobs are available in Ontario, but we're not doing a very good job matching either. It's the lowest of any Canadian province. The national average for economic immigration across Canada's provinces is approximately 70%, so we're about 20 percentage points below that. One explanation for that could very well be the lower employment rate for new Canadians in Ontario, which currently sits at 75.4%, according to the Centre for Immigration and Community Services. The number is well below that of provincial leaders, like Alberta and Manitoba, which have employment rates for new Canadians in excess of 82%.

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That was one of the themes that I heard from people as I was doing my small business round tables across the province. I had the opportunity in my first couple of years here at Queen's Park to serve as the small business critic. A lot of the people who I spoke with in that capacity and also in my citizenship and immigration portfolio were telling me that they were promised one thing in their home country before they arrived here in Ontario, and that was that they were going to have the opportunity to get a job in their chosen field. In a lot of cases, I would speak to somebody who was trained as a physician in their own country. A lot of the hospitals that we're talking about in their chosen country were equally comparable to the type of hospitals that we have here, with the technology we have here and the advancement that we have here. It wasn't as if they worked in a MASH unit somewhere, is what I'm trying to get across. They had the opportunity to work with the latest equipment.

They were told when they arrived here that they would have an opportunity to get a job in their chosen field, whether it was in medicine or whatever it might be. But when they arrived and touched down at Pearson international airport in Mississauga and they went through the processes of getting a job here—and these were their words—they were told that they were a zero, that they weren't going to have the opportunity to get the job in their chosen field.

We all talk about it when we hop in a cab and head to an event here in Toronto. Quite often, you'll strike up a conversation with the cab driver and they'll tell you that when they were in their country of origin they were working as a doctor; and here they are working as a cab driver.

I had the opportunity up in Brampton to meet with a couple of gentlemen who were foreign-trained doctors. One is working as a security guard here in Toronto and another is working as a real estate agent up in the Brampton area. They just don't have the opportunity here that they were promised they would have. They're willing to pass—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: Well, this has to do with credentialing and it has to do with what happens at the provincial level.

I have an example of a young lady who is in my riding. Her name is Jennifer Ireland. She grew up in the Bancroft area and went to North Hastings High School. She went to university here in Toronto and then went over to Scotland to take her medical courses. She is now a pediatrician. We need pediatricians. Especially in eastern Ontario, where I'm from, there's a shortage of pediatricians. She is unable to get a residency here in Canada, in Ontario, in her home community, because she's a foreign-trained doctor.

These are the types of issues that we need to be addressing in this legislation that we aren't addressing in this legislation. We need medical professionals, especially in the underserved areas of the province. We have the people who want to come from abroad. They grew up and lived their formative years in Bancroft, in Ontario. They go away to school to get their medical credentials and then they're not recognized in this province. So we have a problem there, especially when we have a shortage of pediatricians.

We have a hospital in Trenton, Trenton Memorial Hospital, part of the Quinte Health Care chain, that is constantly bringing in doctors to work from out of the area because they can't find the doctors to work in that underserved part of the province. It's the same thing up north. There's a shortage of medical professionals in North Hastings and Bancroft. There are a lot of newcomers to our province who would love the opportunity, but they can't because the government doesn't have what it takes to tackle that issue of credentialing with the various organizations they need to tackle those issues with.

Let's move on. According to Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration stats from a couple of years ago, the number of federal skilled-worker applicants landing in Ontario has fallen 57% under the watch of this government. The number of federal skilled-worker applicants landing in Ontario has fallen 57% under the watch of the Dalton McGuinty-Kathleen Wynne Liberal government here in Ontario. It's now below the average—well below the average—of those from across Canada.

It's prosperity that fuels immigration. As I mentioned earlier, these people who are living abroad and consider-

ing locating in Ontario or considering coming to Canada have access to the Internet. They have access to all of the information on the various provinces in Canada and the States, for that matter. Right now, those people, in far greater numbers than in the past, are choosing the Western provinces because Ontario isn't offering them the opportunity to prosper like we once did. It's a serious problem.

When we were prosperous not so long ago, we were attracting more new Canadians to Ontario. The finance ministry's own numbers will bear this out. From 1997 until approximately 2002, this province experienced one of the greatest booms in immigration that we had seen in the last 40 years; 1997 to 2002 also coincides with one of the greatest economic booms that this province has seen, and that was during the Conservatives' time in power here at Queen's Park. There was a Conservative government that created millions of jobs and attracted them from all around the world.

People go where the jobs are. It's that simple. When they are coming to a jurisdiction to live and raise a family, they want to make sure that there's the opportunity to do that. Unfortunately, Ontario, right now, is down on that list.

As has been pointed out a couple of different times here this afternoon, we continue to see these companies closing shop and moving. The member from Kitchener-Conestoga—I heard him earlier this afternoon mentioning the Schneiders factory and the fact that the last bologna has made its way off the line at the Schneiders factory. It's this kind of thing that's—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They're moving to Hamilton.

Mr. Todd Smith: Well, where did Wrigley's go? Where did Heinz go? I'm asking. Where did Heinz go?

Interjection: Kellogg's.

Mr. Todd Smith: Where did Kellogg's go? There are so many examples of companies that have left Ontario because it's a less desirable jurisdiction than it once was. They are leaving because of soaring electricity rates. They are soaring because of increased red tape. The costs of doing business in this province continue to rise and make this a less desirable jurisdiction to locate a business, to sustain a business. I hear it from my Quinte Manufacturers Association representatives all the time. I meet with them on a quarterly basis at my office, and we talk about the state of their environment.

We've been very, very fortunate for the most part in the Quinte region and in eastern Ontario to keep the companies that we have here, but there have been some who have had to close up shop. But all of them, Mr. Speaker—all of them—are telling me that they are feeling the pressure. They are feeling the pressure, because of the rising electricity rates and the rising and increased red tape that they have to deal with, to stay here in Ontario.

A lot of them have parent companies that they have to answer to, and they have to defend why they are keeping the plant in Ontario open, why they are keeping the Belleville plant open. There is a lot of pressure there for

these plant managers in my region who have located there and set up a home and raised their family there to convince the parent company—whether they are in North Carolina, whether they're in the Middle East or whether they're in the United States—why they should keep that plant open in eastern Ontario because of the pressures that exist and the opportunities elsewhere that are there for them to move. When you talk about bringing in a carbon tax, a cap-and-trade system and things like the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, it certainly doesn't make them feel any more comfortable about being here in Ontario.

The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants did their study. The number one concern that they identified among new Canadians was unemployment. Almost 62% of new Canadians identify employment as their biggest concern. It's a huge concern for all of us in Ontario right now, but especially new Canadians.

When new Canadians are saying that that's one of their largest concerns, that's a problem that we're dealing with when we're trying to attract newcomers to our province. That doesn't just include newcomers; it includes new business and new industry that's going to create jobs as well. There are some good things in this bill, and I think that by making some amendments at committee, we can certainly make this a bill that can do some good.

1650

We talked about the provincial nominee program. I know the previous speakers who have had the opportunity to speak on this have already mentioned the PNP, the provincial nominee program. We would like to see more spaces allocated for Ontario as well, but we have to have the opportunity for those investors and those companies to have the spaces available to provide that sponsorship in the PNP. That has to happen as well.

I have another study here by OCASI. It shows that almost two thirds of new Canadians come to Ontario have at least completed trade school. We need to get those new Ontarians into jobs where they're best able to use their skills, but we also have to have jobs available for them. We can reform the system as much as we want, but until we have the jobs, we just don't have the answer.

What this government has been doing is bringing in bodies like the College of Trades. When we talk about skilled trades, we have to talk about the College of Trades, which is making it more difficult for businesses, as well, in Ontario to succeed, expand and create new jobs. There is a review under way at the College of Trades—I know we all are aware of that, and the fact that the College of Trades hasn't done what it was set out to do.

The College of Trades has created what some of my colleagues refer to as trade cops, who are out there duplicating the job of Ministry of Labour officials, and going onto job sites and making the activities that are happening on those job sites come to a grinding halt and slowing down business in the province of Ontario. I don't believe that was the intent of the Ontario College of Trades, but that's one of the unfortunate consequences as

a result of bringing in the College of Trades, making it more difficult for new positions to be created for these businesses.

Hon. Jeff Leal: You should raise a glass to that.

Mr. Todd Smith: We can look at all the different pieces of legislation; I've outlined a few of them already.

Interjections.

Mr. Todd Smith: You know, my friend across the way brings up the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act. Indeed, we should raise a glass to Ontario. We passed that private member's bill last week, but that's exactly the type of legislation we need in this province. That's the type of legislation we should see from this government. It's legislation like that that's going to create jobs and opportunity for people here in Ontario.

I just had the Wine Council of Ontario up in my office, talking about the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act and some of the red tape they're dealing with in that industry. There's every opportunity there for that industry to grow—the wine industry, the craft beer industry, the craft cider industry and the craft distillers. There's every opportunity there for them to grow. Instead we're getting pieces of legislation coming forward from the government that are doing absolutely nothing to create jobs in our province.

The type of private member's bill like Raise a Glass to Ontario can help to set this province on the right path to creating jobs, not just for people in Ontario but for newcomers to Ontario as well. The Wine Council of Ontario, moments ago, told me that they have created 14,000 jobs in that sector—14,000 jobs in the wine sector—but the potential for them to explode and create double that number of jobs exists. All they need is a helping hand from the government to clear the path of red tape and allow that type of growth to occur in the wine industry—the VQA industry in Ontario—and in the craft beer industry. We have such great products here and so much to be proud of in Ontario that we should be making the most of that.

Hon. Jeff Leal: See, I gave you a whole new speech.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Leal, the Minister of Agriculture, for allowing me to go off on that tangent and talk about Raise a Glass to Ontario.

You know what? I do believe in the potential of Ontario. I think we all do. That's why we're here as members of provincial Parliament. I knew that when I arrived in Ontario from New Brunswick back in the early 1990s, I came to Ontario because there were a lot more jobs and a lot more opportunity here in Ontario in the 1990s. I worry about the fact that my young daughters, who are 12 and 14, aren't going to have the opportunity that I've had to have a successful job in broadcasting prior to coming here. They are not going to have the opportunity to stay in Ontario unless we turn the economic situation around here in Ontario. We need some bills coming from this government that are going to do that, that are going to stimulate growth, that are going to stimulate economic activity, that are going to clear the red tape and allow not just our children—and I know Jeff has a young girl as

well. We want them to stay here. We want them to be prosperous in Ontario, just like we want our newcomers from all around the world to come to Ontario. We've got a lot of work to do, and this is a small step in making that happen.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to speak in this House, and it's an incredible honour to be able to speak on immigration in Ontario because, as many of us, I'm also the descendant of an immigrant. My grandfather came with 14 kids. One of them was my Uncle Ernie, the MPP from Oxford county. One of them was my mother, Georgina.

My father was also an immigrant, and my father was sponsored by the Premier of New Brunswick to come work on his farm. My father told me stories about getting off the boat, going in a cart, and all he remembered was blackflies and rocks. When his year was over, he went back to Holland. In another year, he was sponsored again by the Premier of New Brunswick and he went back again. And in another year, he went back to Holland.

The third time, he was sponsored by a family in Alberta. They were supposed to have a dairy farm and he was going to work—because he wanted to be a farmer and there was no ability to do that in Holland after the war. He went to Alberta on the train. The person picked him up in the carriage and they took him to the farm. He had a couple of cows and a couple of horses. My dad had a little bit of money. He got back on the train and he got off the train in Woodstock, and that's where he met my mom.

I'm also married to an immigrant. I'm certainly glad that she didn't get off the plane at a place she wasn't supposed to, because I love her very much.

It's really important that we take the time to talk about this bill, because immigration to this province is what built this province and it's one of the things that we have to make sure we concentrate on to keep building this province.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say this is a wonderful opportunity to hear about different immigration stories. I bet there has been no other Legislature ever in the history of this country where we've had an uncle-nephew immigration story being told on the same day.

I have to say, though, that it's very, very disappointing to hear members of the opposition really badmouthing Ontario, in effect telling immigrants to Ontario that they made a bad choice, that they should have gone to Alberta. You know, over 100,000 immigrants come every year to this province, and they've made a very good choice. On this side of the House, we're proud of Ontario. We're proud of the place that we have built over decades and, indeed, centuries. It's a wonderful place to live.

I want to take a moment, because this goes back—my PhD thesis, and if any of you are needing to sleep, you

might want to read this, is about immigration. It's the importance that we have immigrants come to Ontario, that we have immigrants who are moving to all corners of Ontario. I'd be happy to provide the reference to my thesis for anyone who wants to learn more. But it actually is interesting.

This bill has given me some opportunity to look at the Ministry of Finance website. We have some very talented demographers, many of them trained at Western, who work in the Ministry of Finance and look at our demographic projections. If you actually do your research, you'll see that the number of immigrants coming to Ontario is robust. Listening to the members opposite, you'd think the numbers had plummeted. That simply isn't true Speaker. We welcome in excess of 100,000 immigrants. Over 300 people a day start their new life in Ontario. We welcome them. We want them to prosper. We want to do everything government can do to give them those opportunities.

1700

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: This has been a good hour, a presentation from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. He's known for his tremendous work over recent years with various new-arrival communities in the province of Ontario.

The presentations from the members for Leeds–Grenville and Oxford again reiterate why we, as opposition, support Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. It needs to be harmonized with federal initiatives, at any rate.

It's so interesting to hear the member for Oxford talking about the trains stopping in Woodstock. I understand that at that time, there would have been a sugar beet grower in Manitoba who probably had trouble getting his crop off, with 14 fewer people to harvest that crop. Again, it's Ontario's gain. Now we have John Vanthof and Ernie Hardeman in the Ontario Legislature.

The Dutch community has had a tremendous contribution in my riding, particularly since the 1950s, to religious life; social, cultural and economic life; and agribusiness, as has the Hungarian community—the advent of 100 years of tobacco down my way. So many people came over from Europe after the two great wars: Czechoslovakian, Lithuanian and certainly Polish—and Belgian. We have probably the largest Belgian community anywhere in North America.

When you think back to my riding 60 or 70 years ago, my grandfather was a federal MP at the time. Because of this immigration, primarily from Europe, the riding of Norfolk was the most ethnically diverse riding in Ontario, back when the city of Toronto was a WASP city.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed a pleasure to stand on behalf of the constituents of Windsor–Tecumseh and speak this afternoon on Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration

Act, following comments by members from Oxford, Leeds–Grenville, and Prince Edward–Hastings.

I'm really lucky. I am a descendant of the United Empire Loyalists. Captain John Hatfield came to Nova Scotia in 1784. There is a book about him; they trace all descendants down. When the book was written, my dad was the fifth generation. I'm the sixth, my kids are the seventh, and their kids are the eighth. We can trace our roots back to the United Empire Loyalists, which is good.

My wife's parents came from Slovakia and Hungary, first to Sudbury—

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You did meet; that's right. She's chair of the public school board down in Windsor, and you were down there visiting the schools.

From Slovakia and Hungary, they first went to Sudbury and then into Windsor.

Windsor, I believe, is the fourth most diverse city in Canada, Speaker. One of our high schools has, of languages spoken at home, more than 100 different languages. We have a great multicultural council, a fantastic Carrousel of the Nations. We know what immigration is all about.

I was surprised, when I left city council, to read the statistics on the riding. In the ward I represented on city council, the language most spoken in the home was Polish. The new people coming in are coming from Poland, more so than France, Germany or Italy, which was the case in the past. In fact, the guy who was elected to replace me on Windsor city council, Irek Kusmierczyk, obviously is Polish, and his father was one of the founders of the Solidarity movement over there.

So we are changing; Ontario is changing. We have to reach out and embrace this cultural change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I gather that the member for Prince Edward–Hastings will reply.

Mr. Todd Smith: Always quick off the mark, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

Thanks to all those who provided comments in the Legislature here this afternoon. I, too, am the beneficiary of immigration. My wife is a black woman from Antigua, and I have two beautiful little girls, who have a wonderful colour about them as well.

I have spent so much time learning about all of the different multicultural communities that we have here in the GTA, especially over the last two and a half years, whether it was visiting a gurdwara in our Sikh community up in Brampton or visiting Vaisakhi or Diwali celebrations in the Punjabi community. We just had Thai Pongal in the Tamil community, and of course, we were this year able to celebrate, for the first time officially, Tamil Heritage Month in Ontario, as a result of a bill that I was able to pass with the help of all of the members of the Legislature unanimously back in March of last year. So the Tamil community in Ontario is ever grateful for the efforts of all of us.

But the bottom line in this debate is that while we still are seeing new Canadians coming to Ontario, immigrants

coming to Ontario, we are seeing fewer of them than we used to. According to a study prepared by TD Economics, Ontario lost approximately 18,000 people to inter-provincial migration in 2012. This is just a couple of years ago. Some 18,000 people who were here in Ontario decided that they were going to move to another province because they had a better opportunity to get a job, to get work, to raise their family. That was just a couple of years ago. That's three times the next highest province. A full 61% of those leaving Ontario for other provinces ended up in BC, Alberta or Saskatchewan. Why do you believe they were going there? It's because they had a better opportunity to get a job in those provinces that have their economic policies in place for growth, giving them the ability to raise the family and have the prosperity that they wanted when they came to Canada in the first place.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to rise in this House and speak on Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act, on behalf of the people I represent in London West. I first want to recognize my colleague the MPP for London–Fanshawe, who is not in the House today but was in the House earlier and has done some important work on this bill as the immigration critic for the NDP caucus. When she spoke to Bill 49, she did an exemplary job identifying some of the concerns that New Democrats have about this bill and some of the areas where we see room for improvement.

As provincial representatives for the city of London, the member for London–Fanshawe and I are both very much aware of the importance of immigration in building a strong local economy and ensuring a vibrant, diverse and inclusive city. We are also aware of the human costs of not adequately supporting immigrants once they arrive in our community.

The member from London–Fanshawe shared an email she had received from an internationally educated engineer who was frustrated and discouraged about not being able to enter his profession in London. In my comments on this legislation, when I spoke to it in the last Parliament, I also shared stories from constituents in London West, similar stories of internationally trained physicians who were losing hope about ever being able to practise the specialized skills they spent years training for. These constituents are at the point of leaving London, maybe even leaving Ontario. They are telling other professionals from their home countries not to come to Canada, telling them they will not be able to find work in their chosen profession. This is hardly the kind of positive word of mouth that is going to encourage more immigrants to come to Ontario.

It's heartening that MPPs are debating this bill. The bill makes a strong statement about the value of immigration to Ontario. It includes a commitment to francophone immigration. It specifically recognizes the importance of family and humanitarian commitments, and it recognizes municipalities and employers as important partners. All

of this is positive and encouraging, and as the MPP for London West, I can tell you that the fact we are talking about immigration is important to my community. It helps to support London's efforts to enhance our reputation as a welcoming community and to strengthen our capacity to provide settlement and integration services. These efforts are being led by an amazing collaboration between the city of London and the United Way in the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, or LIP. Many of you have LIPs in your communities. They are federally funded bodies established to enable local engagement in immigration settlement and integration. They support collaboration and coordination across sectors and community partners, many of which are provincially funded. They also lead a process of strategic planning at the local level. Evaluation of the LIP model is validating the success of this approach, demonstrating the value of engaging all stakeholders in local planning and implementation. It is also positioning the work that is being done by the London and Middlesex LIP as best practice across the province and even the country.

1710

Certainly we know as a province that we have to learn from best practice and do something to increase our share of immigrants to Ontario. Between 2001 and 2011, Ontario's proportion of immigrants declined from 60% to 40%, which is Ontario's lowest share of immigrants in at least 30 years. In particular, Ontario's share of economic immigrants has significantly declined, to the point where economic immigrants make up only half of all immigrants to Ontario, lower than any other province.

In my community of London, we have identified the attraction and retention of newcomers as a high priority. The 2011 national household survey showed that London lost as many immigrants as we gained. London is also less diverse than the rest of the province. Immigrants make up only 22% of our population compared to 29% across Ontario.

The makeup of our immigrant population is also quite different from the rest of Ontario. Our two largest ethnic groups are Spanish-speaking immigrants and Arabic-speaking immigrants. Many bring pre-arrival experiences of war or trauma, even those who do not arrive as refugees.

London is often a preferred secondary destination for immigrants after they have arrived in Toronto and is a primary destination for many refugees. But whether they are economic immigrants, refugees or family-sponsored immigrants, newcomers to London face significant barriers.

Last fall, London's Vital Signs report was released. It showed that the rate of unemployment among recent immigrants to London, those who had arrived within the last five years, was almost 20% in 2011 compared to 8.5% for non-immigrants. Half of all immigrant households live below the poverty line.

We know that immigration is critical to our economic and social well-being as a community and as a province, and we therefore have an obligation to make sure that the

services are there to welcome and support newcomers when they arrive. We need caring and compassionate services, culturally competent services, especially for refugees, those who are fleeing persecution from their home countries or have experienced war or trauma.

I'm proud of the work that is being done in London. For example, the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration is an organization that has garnered national attention for its culturally responsive and evidence-based programming. Like so many other agencies, however, the MRCSSI struggles for funding to stay afloat, despite the significant need it is meeting in our community.

I'm now going to turn to a summary of the main provisions of Bill 49 and then focus on some of the issues that are not addressed but must be taken into consideration as the province moves forward.

First, Bill 49 enshrines into law the province's authority to establish and govern settlement programs for both temporary and permanent immigrants and also gives the ministry the power to set targets for the number and types of immigrants to Ontario with selection criteria that meet provincial, economic and labour market needs.

This sounds like a major change. However, it is important to note that the federal government would have to approve any new programs and targets, and there is no guarantee this will happen. While Ontario has been able to attract some immigrants under the provincial nominee program, Ontario's share has historically been very small.

Second, the bill enables the minister to conduct research, organize education and training programs and appoint committees on immigration-related issues. This is a vital aspect of the bill because we need to understand what programs are working, how they are working and how we can improve.

Third, the bill allows the minister to establish registries for both employers and recruiters who are interested in participating in Ontario's selection programs. This employer registry is similar to that currently in place in Manitoba for those who hire migrant workers from overseas, and the recruiter registry aligns with the new protections that were passed earlier this session. A disappointing omission is that the bill does not require employment agencies and recruiters to register, which is something we would have liked to see, given the stories we've all heard about unscrupulous recruiters and the exploitation of foreign workers.

There is also a lack of clarity about the role of the federal government since employers must apply directly to the federal government to recruit migrant workers, and there is the omission of lawyers and consultants and anyone else who provides employment, guidance, advice, placement or any other kind of recruitment services for newcomers. These professionals are absent or excluded from the registry.

Fourth, the bill sets out a number of provisions related to process, new measures to monitor and detect possible contraventions of the act, new powers for the minister to

collect, use and disclose personal information and a new compliance and enforcement regime, including inspection, investigation powers, offences and penalties for both individuals and organizations. The bill also establishes regulatory authority in areas such as program administration, eligibility, compliance, internal review and the payment of fines.

Finally, the bill aligns requirements under the Regulated Health Professions Act with those in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act to improve the ability of internationally educated health professionals to enter their profession and to require timely decision-making, transparency of records and reasonable application fees.

As the NDP critic for training, colleges and universities, I now want to focus on some issues related to post-secondary education that are not identified in the bill but must be addressed as the federal government proceeds with its new Express Entry immigration process, which will definitely have an impact on how we do things in Ontario.

First, there is a concern that federal changes to immigration may make it more difficult for international students who have recently graduated from Canadian universities to qualify for permanent residence. Under the old system, international students with Canadian work experience were given priority status when they applied for permanent residence, and thousands of students have stayed in Canada and Ontario as a result.

Relatively open access to permanent residence has been a significant advantage for Ontario colleges and universities in their international student recruitment efforts. Many institutions have developed comprehensive infrastructure to support their international recruitment initiatives.

As of January of this year, however, the new system of Express Entry will place international students who have a degree or a diploma from a Canadian institution in a pool with all other skilled workers. There, they may be invited to apply for permanent residence if there is no Canadian qualified to do the job but will have to compete on points with skilled workers who may have many years of experience.

Currently, international students make up the majority of Ontario's 2,500 provincial nominee program spots. Under the new rules, they will still be able to apply for permanent residence through the provincial nominee program and are, therefore, likely to make up an even greater proportion of provincial nominee immigrants, given the competition they are going to face in the Express Entry pool.

The focus on economic class immigrants and the increased provincial nominee program targets that are included in Bill 49 thus shift responsibility for settlement service provision away from government and gives it over to employers and post-secondary institutions. Since employers and post-secondary institutions have not traditionally been involved in settlement service delivery and may have limited experience in ensuring appropriate

services, concerns have been raised about the quality of service provision. When immigrants are not effectively integrated into the local community, they may decide to move their families elsewhere, including to another province, which defeats one of the main purposes of the provincial nominee program.

This shift in the provision of settlement services also raises policy implications about funding and about the ability of employers and post-secondary institutions to deliver comprehensive settlement supports.

At the same time that we're seeing this shift, there are also calls from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce for colleges and universities to expand recruitment initiatives aimed at international students. The chamber is calling on the government to modify eligibility requirements and the provincial funding formula to allow international students and graduates to access all provincial newcomer settlement and labour market integration programs and ensure that adequate funding is provided to meet the increase in services.

1720

The second issue that's relevant to my critic portfolio concerns bridging programs for internationally educated professionals. These programs help internationally educated newcomers adjust to the Canadian context and address any gaps in the competencies or skills they require to practise in Ontario. These are often delivered in post-secondary institutions.

Just last month, the Fairness Commissioner issued her 2015 report and highlighted persistent problems that create barriers to internationally educated professionals entering practice. These include issues around the fairness of registration requirements, the quality of assessments, registration decisions and access to records. Some of these issues are going to be addressed in Bill 49. However, many of the issues she identifies will not.

Her report called on regulatory bodies to justify the necessity of all requirements for registration, including the requirement for Canadian work experience. This is often the biggest, most insurmountable barrier that an immigrant faces. In 2013, it was also found by the Ontario Human Rights Commission to be discriminatory. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has actually passed a policy that calls on regulators to remove the Canadian experience requirement except for very rare circumstances. The policy states that employers and regulatory bodies must ask about all of a job applicant's previous work and not where they got their experience.

The Fairness Commissioner's January report also includes some other recommendations; in particular, sustainable funding for bridging programs. The report points out that bridging programs are highly dependent on project funding from the Ministry of Citizenship and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Recognizing that fees to participate in these programs are often quite prohibitive, the ability of internationally educated professionals to participate can be limited. The commissioner encouraged the expansion of the Ontario Bridging Participant Assistance Program, or OBPA, to enable

more internationally educated professionals to access bridging. One example: It costs about \$12,000 for the internationally educated nursing program. OBPA provides only \$5,000 to help offset the bridging program tuition. So you can see that this would present a real barrier to an internationally educated nurse.

I also wanted to make a couple of additional comments about the bill, particularly in light of my role as NDP critic for women's issues. The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants pointed out that the programs that Ontario funds for settlement and integration are small; however, these programs form a critical component of the service continuum and provide opportunity to meet the needs of unserved and underserved groups. Women are clearly an underserved group in the settlement sector or in the immigrant-serving sector. Bill 49 is silent on the role of the community-based, non-profit immigrant- and refugee-serving sector, which we see as a concern.

Some of the agencies involved in the sector are doing some great work to apply a gender lens to the immigrant experience. We know that males are more likely than women to be economic-class immigrants, and female spouses are much more likely to be family-sponsored immigrants than male spouses. Sponsored individuals are highly vulnerable because of their uncertain legal status in Canada, which depends on having an ongoing positive relationship with their sponsor. If the relationship breaks down, sponsored women may feel that they are unable to leave their home. If they experience violence or abuse, the risks of reporting the violence are enormous because of fear of deportation.

There has been research conducted showing that sponsored women who have not obtained permanent residency status are systematically isolated and excluded from society. They are often home with their children, not eligible to participate in the formal labour market, have no access to language training or other settlement programming, and are not eligible for social assistance. So organizations at the community level, like OCASI, play a vital role in sensitizing settlement workers to the unique experiences of immigrant women.

In closing, Speaker, while we appreciate the intent of Bill 49 on this side of the House, we are also concerned that the legislation does not address some of the real and fundamental challenges facing newcomers to our province, some of the challenges I spoke of earlier. It does not address the long-standing problems of ensuring that highly trained immigrants are able to work in their professional field and that they find employment that matches their experience and can earn incomes that are in line with those of other, similarly educated Ontarians.

It does not deal with settlement issues, such as housing, education, health care and a myriad of other issues. It does not address issues that affect non-economic-class immigrants—refugees and family-sponsored immigrants—including their ability to enter the labour force.

These are issues that did not just appear on the government's policy agenda this year, or last year, when the

bill was first introduced. These are issues that we have been hearing about for years and years in this province.

We are glad that the legislation has finally been brought forward. We are glad that we are talking about immigration in this place, because we recognize the importance of immigration to our shared economic and social prosperity. However, we are disappointed that the Liberal government did not act sooner to bring this forward. After more than a decade in office, it's time that immigration legislation is being discussed.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to stand and respond to the very interesting comments from the member for London West on Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act.

I think it's important to understand that Bill 49 isn't the be-all and end-all for everything to do with legislation. It's really the first step; it's the starting point.

I noticed that earlier in her remarks, the member from London West mentioned the change in Ontario's immigration history—a larger proportion going to other provinces; a different mix of immigrants coming here—and it's really to address some of those issues that Bill 49 is being discussed.

It's actually the necessary first step that Ontario needs to take if we're going to chart our own course when it comes to attracting skilled immigrants. We know that we need to get the skilled immigrants here to drive our economy, and that they're an absolutely essential part of our workforce. That's what this legislation is focused on: strengthening Ontario's role in immigrant selection and settlement.

If passed, it would put the necessary tools in place to help Ontario welcome the skilled immigrants it needs to meet future labour market needs. It would improve compliance and enforcement measures, and it would increase transparency and information sharing, to improve immigrant selection.

Speaker, immigrants are absolutely essential to our future economic health, so I'm very pleased that this piece of legislation is now being debated in the Legislature.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to get up to comment on the member from London West, on Bill 49. She makes some good points. This bill is long overdue. We're seeing our portion of immigration in this country declining from what used to be first place to being really far down the list, as far as immigrants, or new Canadians, coming to Ontario, looking for a better job.

If I go back in my own family history, I had a grandfather who went to the States, back at the end of the last century, and was called back when my great-grandfather passed away. In those days, the best jobs were not in the country. When my uncles were looking for work, they went to places in northern Ontario, because at that time we were mainly rural, with jobs in northern Ontario in the mines, because that became the place to go. Another

uncle went to the States because of the car industry in Detroit during the depression.

1730

But then there was a period of time when Ontario got booming. We were the place to be in Canada. Our manufacturing was second to none in this country, and actually second to none on this continent. Now we've seen that dry up. Jobs aren't here. Immigration, we see from the stats, is moving to places other than Ontario, because that's where they can get a job and that's where opportunity lies.

Of course, we're doing something to try to attract our fair share. Our numbers have been dropping. New Canadians are well-trained, smart people. They don't want to come to Ontario and not have a job, or be underemployed like we're seeing. They want a good-paying job, and unfortunately, under this government, they have to go elsewhere.

We want to see that come back. Maybe this is a first step, but it's about time they took that first step.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed a pleasure to stand and offer some comments on the wonderful address by the member from London West. When she talked about the changing face of London, she talked about the Arabic community. In my last term on Windsor city council, we had three Arabic-speaking members of council, including the mayor.

Windsor is changing. We're in that border area where, in Dearborn, Michigan, I believe it's the highest Lebanese population outside of Beirut. People come where the jobs are. They bring their families, they open businesses, their young people get educated and their relatives go back and forth across the border. I think Windsor right now has some of the best Arabic restaurants in the entire province. It's amazing what's happening there.

If you want to talk about the new face of Ontario, you need to look no further than this chamber and the beautiful and handsome faces of our legislative pages. They're from all over Ontario, and they come from such a diverse cultural mix. These are the next members of provincial Parliament, the next members of cabinet. Perhaps there will even be a Premier coming out of these legislative pages' ranks. Ontario is changing, and I think it's overdue. It's a good thing. We can all benefit from new immigrants coming into our province.

The thing that troubles me more than anything, though, is that we have to do more to recognize the skills, educational backgrounds and professions that many of our new immigrants bring. In Windsor we used to talk about PhDs and MDs driving cabs at one time. We have to do more to enhance their cultural experience when they arrive in our communities.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to add my voice, as hoarse as it is, to the debate on this bill. It's an import-

ant piece of legislation, one that recognizes a very important fact: that immigrants have built this country.

My dad came over as a Scottish immigrant. He didn't have a particular set of skills, but he was a blue-collar type, a hard-working guy who provided for his family—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: He probably voted for the NDP.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes, he was a solid New Democrat. He brought me up well.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: But he evolved.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: But he evolved, yes.

But I want to go off on a post-secondary tangent for a bit. When I had the privilege of being the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, I was asked to lead a delegation to Winnipeg to meet with the 31 ministers of education from the various provinces in China. We talked a lot. It was about student success and retention.

One of the things that I discovered—I think the person from Beijing talked about their one million international students. We had some controversy, you remember, about 600. I said, “How do you do that? What’s the rationale?” He said, “Well, with full scholarships we attract one million international students, your best and your brightest. If we can convince 10% of them to stay, our history of having five times the new industrial patents in China as you have in all of North America will continue. Our economy will continue to grow and to thrive.” You know what? There are a lot of things I don't like about the system there, but they've sure got the right approach to education, and it's paying dividends.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. We return to the member for London West for her reply.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank the Minister of Education, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for their comments on my remarks.

A couple of things: Thank you to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for that lovely recognition of our pages and the important role they are going to play in moving this province forward.

In response to the comment that the member for Windsor–Tecumseh also made about recognizing the skills that newcomers bring to our community, I think that the example I raised of post-secondary bridging programs is really important. I have research here. The Ryerson internationally educated social work professionals bridging program reports that 90% of the graduates of that program are professionally employed within six months of graduation. So bridging programs work. They are a very effective way to help internationally educated newcomers bridge any gaps that they may have and to get to practise the career they were trained for.

But they are very difficult for many newcomers to access. There's a lack of stability around the programs because institutions never know if they're going to be able to offer them. Students can't really afford to access them when there are very high tuition fees involved, and many of these internationally educated people are

working survival jobs during the day. They can't afford not to work in order to go to a bridging program.

I think there is lots of opportunity for the government to introduce new measures on bridging programs, to introduce more financial supports for both students and institutions to participate.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 49. I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Transportation and my colleague from Mississauga–Brampton South, as well as my colleague from Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying I am one of those immigrants who has been in Canada since 1970. Recently, I spoke in the House about the Wong Association of Ontario. I want to do a shout-out to them because my family tree is from the Wongs.

Remarks in Cantonese.

That means older Chinese have been here in Canada, and my family tree has been here for over 100, before Confederation. So I wanted to shout out to them.

I also wanted to remind and correct some of the information that was shared earlier. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings earlier talked about internationally trained doctors and what have you. I was at an event recently with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities at MaRS district. Merck, which is an international pharmaceutical company, was making an announcement on World Cancer Day. They publicly said the reason why they chose Ontario, Canada, to do that particular investment was because of Ontario's investment in terms of medical science.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings said immigrants are going out west or further east. The data clearly shows they're coming back to Ontario.

I was very pleased our colleague from the third party, from Timiskaming–Cochrane, talked about his own family tree with his colleague, his uncle Ernie. All of us have those stories, unless you're First Nations, the first people in Ontario. All of us in this House are immigrants, and I'm very proud of our heritage.

With regard to Bill 49, if passed, the proposed legislation would position Ontario as a full partner in immigration with the federal government, giving Ontario a framework in which to design, deliver and manage a larger, more complex section of the program.

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I heard my colleague from London West talk about the bridging program. In my riding of Scarborough–Agin-court we have an organization called CPAC. They have done an outstanding job in terms of a bridging program supporting internationally trained accountants and financial advisers from overseas. That particular program is so successful that almost every participant who completed the program is employed. Recently, CPAC also had a partnership with the University of Toronto in terms of language training and support.

With regard to the bridging program that the member from London West talked about, to date our government has funded the bridging program, targeting more than 100 occupations and close to 50,000 highly skilled immigrants. Since 2003 we have invested more than \$240 million in terms of the bridging program. Of course, more needs to be done in this particular area because we all recognize or have heard stories where foreign-trained individuals are doing substandard work. We need to work with the sectors.

I know that my colleague opposite from Prince Edward–Hastings also talked about foreign-trained physicians and what happens when they come to Ontario. If the proposed Bill 49 is passed, it will then amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, the RHPA, to align requirements of the RHPA with those of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act related to timeliness in decision-making and access to records. These amendments were requested by the Office of the Fairness Commissioner.

As a former nurse, I know that there are many foreign-trained nurses overseas, and they look to this proposed legislation to help them to get recognition, training and credentials. At the end of the day, if these foreign-trained professionals are able to get the jobs here in Ontario that they were trained to do overseas—when they succeed, all of Ontario succeeds.

The other piece here is that we know that the registration practices need to be more transparent and more objective, and, more importantly, that decisions have to be timely. We've all heard complaints like, "When will the decision be made? How come they're not transparent?"

Speaker, because of the time, I'm going to let my colleague the Minister of Transportation carry on this discussion. Minister?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Scarborough–Agincourt for lending her voice to this debate this afternoon and very eloquently telling a little bit of her own personal story. As she mentioned at the very outset of her remarks, we will be sharing our time. There are two of our colleagues still to come: the member from Mississauga–Brampton South and the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

I've had the chance this afternoon to listen to some of the discussion and debate around Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act, and I think it clearly demonstrates that the minister responsible for this legislation, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade—who serves in this place representing a community not far from my own—is, in fact, himself an immigrant to our country. I think, as I've listened to all of the debate this afternoon, it has become very clear that regardless of what side of the Legislature you serve on, whether you're a member of the NDP caucus or the Progressive Conservative caucus or, of course, the government caucus, there is a lot of content in this particular legislation that speaks

to the very best of what has made our province such a place of destination for so many decades.

Of course, many have lent their thoughts to this discussion and have talked about their own personal stories. I know I don't have a lot of time, but as I listen to some of the discussion it's not lost on me that I have the privilege of living in a province like Ontario because my parents and my grandparents made the decision to come here—my mother from Glasgow, Scotland, and my father, of course, from Italy, just south of Rome, both at the age of 20 coming from their respective home countries, my mother in 1961 and my father in 1958, meeting here and deciding to get married.

Interjection: Pier 21.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: My father did come through Pier 21. My mother didn't, but my father did. I had the opportunity to visit Pier 21, which stands as a monument and a testament to all that has made our country so extraordinary.

But I was thinking, as I listened to the debate, of my own grandfather, my paternal grandfather, someone who arrived here in Canada in 1951 from Italy, who worked as a construction labourer, as so many did from Italy and from parts of Europe throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and right up to the present day.

I think of my maternal grandparents as well and my father's grandmother. To imagine that not that many years later, their grandson—and many of his colleagues, again, on all three sides of this House—would be in a position to lend my voice very strongly in support of this particular legislation.

To think what their lives were like. The opportunities that were presented to them in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were, by comparison to what might have existed in their home countries, extraordinary opportunities. Of course, they managed to take advantage of those opportunities that this province and this country presented to them to do well for themselves, their kids and their grandkids, ultimately. But to imagine the circumstances in which they would have lived when they first came to this country, and to have witnessed within the last 40 or so years—to have seen, first of all, the debate that's taking place here this afternoon with respect to the legislation, but also to see what their grandkids might have gone on to work on I think would have been quite an extraordinary thing. If you told my grandfather in 1951 and throughout those early years as he was working in the sewers that were being built across in the city of Toronto, and in fact was significantly injured in in the early 1950s in a cave-in—the best way to describe it is a cave-in in one of the sewers in downtown Toronto—and was injured for the rest of his life. Many years later his hip was replaced, but he always walked with a cane.

I tell that story just to say that if you could have told him in the early 1950s that his grandson would be able to stand in this place, representing a community as diverse and as vibrant as Vaughan, and to lend his voice in support of Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act so that for many generations to come beyond this time in this place,

we'd be in a position as a province to continue to do well by those who want to come from all corners of the world to help enrich this province and enrich this country and help us build this up—it's why it was heartening and encouraging to hear members from London, Windsor and other members of the official opposition caucus talk about the importance of getting this right, understanding that they want to see enhancements and improvements and that there might be a little bit of impatience, which I can understand, with respect to getting this bill through second reading and, ultimately, passed.

But it is certainly encouraging for this son and grandson of immigrants to this country from two outstanding home countries, Scotland and Italy, to witness that we are here, and over the next number of hours and days, that we will get this bill passed at second reading through to committee and brought back, I think, is an extraordinary undertaking on all of our parts.

I've been delighted to add my voice. I will now ask my colleague from Mississauga–Brampton South to provide her debate and her discussion. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 49 and to support Bill 49. My colleagues the Minister of Transportation and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt spoke very eloquently to this bill.

As we all know, Canada is a country of immigrants, and I'm one of those immigrants. I'm proud to stand in this Legislature as a first-generation Canadian. As the members of this Legislature are aware, Ontario's citizenship and immigration minister launched a strategy called A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy and, in our 2013 budget, a fund so that Ontario's immigration system should respond to our province's demographic and economic realities.

Ontario and Mississauga–Brampton South have proud histories of welcoming newcomers to Canada. Immigration, at one time or another, was responsible for Ontario's character today. It continues to enrich our society by infusing our communities with talent, energy, vitality and culture.

It is important that we continue to do our best to serve immigrants in order that they can reach their best potential and give back to our society. This includes helping to ensure skilled labour finds its way into the professions for which immigrants trained in their home country and expect to work in in Canada. I feel that Bill 49's changes will achieve this.

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In considering Bill 49, I cannot help but reflect on my own experience. I arrived in Canada with two master's degrees and 10 years of experience as an educator. Like many immigrants, I faced several bad years for having my qualifications recognized. My story is not unique. It is similar to the experience of many families across Mississauga–Brampton South, Ontario and Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I must admit that Ontario has come a long way since that time. We have much, much better programs since that time. The member from London West spoke about bridge training programs, and she was speaking in favour of those programs. I'm proud to say that it was our government who created those bridge training programs, as well as the Fairness Commissioner of Ontario, so that we can help those newcomers.

Many foreign-trained professionals these days do transition well into our workforce in their own professions. Having said that, I regularly also hear from many of my constituents that this government needs to do more. If passed, this Bill 49, which contains strategic measures for the Regulated Health Professions Act, should help to address this. It also pledges cooperation with our federal government, as immigration is a shared constitutional responsibility. This proposed legislation allows Ontario to chart its own course, one that will help Ontario to be at its best.

So I urge all members of this House to get this bill passed swiftly so that it can go to the committee and we can hear from stakeholders and the public, and it comes back with necessary amendments, passes third reading and becomes a law so that all the newcomers can benefit from this. I strongly believe that when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa–Orléans has the floor.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Je suis fière de partager le débat avec mes collègues concernant le projet de loi 49.

Ontario has a long history of immigration. Immigrants have added to the cultural fabric of this province and nation. It is important that we help them continue to succeed in Ontario. That is why we have brought forth the Ontario Immigration Act.

I understand the challenges that newcomers to Ontario experience, because my husband and his family emigrated from El Salvador. My husband, his two brothers and his parents settled in Ontario in the late 1980s. They are extremely proud to call this province their home. But there were challenges in adapting to their new life here; for example, as simple as filing our income tax, navigating our very complex health care, job searching, registering the children to our school system.

That is why I am proud to stand today in support of the Ontario Immigration Act. Like my family, I want all who choose to come to Ontario to have the supports they need to succeed in this province. This bill, if passed, would give the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the authority to establish and govern settlement and integration programs. This is a continuation of our strong commitment to newcomers to Ontario. In the 2013 Ontario budget, this government affirmed that “the Ontario immigration strategy responds to the province's demographic and economic realities. The province will be proactive in attracting the best and brightest in the world to Ontario, and helping immigrants and their families to settle and prosper.”

For newcomers, adapting not only to a new life in a new country but also communicating in a new language is not easy. My husband came to Ontario, Canada, and learned not only English but French. I feel very proud today to say that he's fluent in English, in French and in Spanish. It did not come easy, and it did not come easy for his parents to learn a new language. That is why I'm proud to say that, since 2003, we have invested approximately \$460 million into language training. Not only are we helping immigrants to better communicate; we are helping them obtain the training needed to succeed in Ontario.

Je suis fière de notre investissement de plus de 240 millions de dollars dans plus de 300 programmes de formation relais, un programme qui a aidé plus de 50 000 nouveaux arrivants qualifiés à l'étranger à intégrer rapidement le marché du travail de l'Ontario. I am proud to stand and talk about this record.

There are many members of this House who are either grandchildren or children of immigrants, or even immigrants themselves, as we heard today. It is amazing to see that many in the House understand the realities inherent in being an immigrant.

I hope everyone here will support the bill. J'espère que tous et chacun vont appuyer ce projet de loi in order that we may continue to support those who want to call Ontario their home.

From a personal standpoint, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the struggle that my husband and his family encountered here, it gives me great pleasure to sit in this Legislature today and talk about the reality of our immigrants and all the right programs and the good programs that are supporting them. Certainly, we have a lot more to do, but this is a first step, as we heard. There is always better to do, and our government's commitment is there.

I look at our immigration law, and increasing our 5% francophone community right here—and we know that a lot of them come to Toronto. We want to add those services. We want to help them reach their full potential by giving them access to the right training so they can find the right job.

Encore une fois, c'est un immense plaisir pour moi d'adresser la Chambre sur ce sujet très personnel envers ma famille, qui a vécu—et je vis chaque jour dans ce sentiment qu'on a été privilégié, avec mon époux, de pouvoir apprendre les langues et de pouvoir s'adapter, mais il y a eu beaucoup de défis. Donc, I thank this government for their effort, and I ask everyone again in this House to support Bill 49.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. Il est 6 h du soir. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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