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Thursday 3 April 2014

Jeudi 3 avril 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING STUDENTS
ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 PROTÉGEANT
LES ÉLÈVES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 1, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 with respect to discipline and other related matters / Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne la discipline et d'autres questions connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When this item was last debated, Mr. Leone had the floor and had 20 minutes and 58 seconds remaining. The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to resume debate on this matter. The last time I spoke to this bill, which was the beginning of my one-hour lead, was October 1 of last year, I believe, so it's been quite some time. I'm pretty sure everyone remembers what I said on October 1, since it was a riveting speech. I remember it was that date because it was about 12 hours or so after I became the critic for education; the very next day, I had to start my one-hour lead on this particular piece of legislation. This piece of legislation, as I noted then, is based upon a very thought-provoking report by the Honourable Justice Patrick LeSage. The LeSage report outlined some of the recommendations that were and should be implemented in reforming the Ontario College of Teachers.

I would say that, without a shadow of a doubt, we are very interested in pursuing what the short title of this legislation is, which is the Protecting Students Act. I can say with absolute certainty that, on this side of the House, that's exactly what we want to do: We want to protect our students. We are moms and dads, aunts and uncles, some of us are grandparents, who deeply care about children. I can state that our Leader of the Opposition has recently added an addition to his family. So certainly children are very important to our daily operation as parents as well as legislators.

At that time, way back in October when this bill was first debated, I started to talk about some of the things that Justice LeSage had stated. I'm not going to repeat too much of what I said back then, because hopefully everyone remembers, but this piece of legislation is an important and timely update to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, an act that was established in 1996, I believe, under our previous government, and an act that we certainly want to see improved.

Justice LeSage painstakingly took and investigated the review of the Ontario College of Teachers. His report, so people remember, is the Review of the Ontario College of Teachers Intake, Investigation and Discipline Procedures and Outcomes, and the Dispute Resolution Program. It was reported on May 31, 2012. There have been a lot of changes that have happened to the Ontario College of Teachers throughout this process, some of which talked about the modifications of who sits on the board of directors, what representation should come from outside the teaching profession versus inside the teaching profession, and changes have been made. I think what Justice LeSage is saying in this report, and what the legislation seeks to do, is to make those reforms necessary to rebalance what's occurring in our College of Teachers. I'm going to go over a few of the provisions that this bill actually does include, and talk about what we appreciate and what we think needs some serious revision.

First of all, one of the key provisions of this legislation is to publish all decisions of the college's discipline committee. The idea behind this proposal is to suggest that if there is an issue with, perhaps, a student raising something with a teacher, the complaint is actually published so people can view it. If there are disciplinary activities that have occurred, people have a right to know. If a teacher teaches in one school board and they try to get a job in another school board, there is a process, there is a system, and there is a mechanism for understanding some of the disciplinary issues or complaints that may have arisen through that teacher's tenure. We think that's an important element that provides a degree of transparency in the system.

The bill also outlines clear rules for the use of an alternative dispute resolution process in confirming that no cases involving sexual abuse, sexual misconduct or child pornography would be eligible for alternative dispute resolution. These are actually very serious offences that may take place, and I think what we would suggest is that the focus must be on reinforcing and reassuring victims of these activities and these acts of sexual misconduct that we are there for them. We are going through

a process—and it's outlining a process in the legislation. Certainly, Justice LeSage talked about some of those items in his report: How you deal with those very serious matters that arise that may have an effect on a person's ability to go to school.

We've talked to some victims of sexual crimes in the past. Very recently, I was in an email exchange with a gentleman who has been a past victim of a sexual crime, and what he wanted me to assure members of the public and people who have been victims of these crimes is that we would do the most to protect those people. They have undergone life-altering experiences in a very negative context. Their psychological and mental health and their mental well-being has changed as a result of these sexual activities, and we have to reassure those people that we are behind these victims. I think what we're saying, when we're deliberating over this bill, is that we have to take some concern and some time to really reinforce this idea that we are there to protect the victims.

This gentleman is part of a network of 12,000 men who have been sexually abused in some way, shape or form. They're heart-wrenching stories, certainly stories that we don't want any of our children to face as they grow up. It's sometimes very troubling for parents to comprehend that these acts actually happen to kids, and we have to make sure that we're doing our utmost to reinforce their protection. Certainly, Justice LeSage was talking about that.

0910

Another major provision that this bill talks about is clarifying when school boards must inform the Ontario College of Teachers of cases where the board has restricted the duties of a teacher or dismissed them for misconduct. There have to be processes outlined. I think everyone would agree that some rules and procedures are put in place so that when allegations of activities have been made against a teacher, they are properly identified. Sometimes, there is an investigative process. Sometimes, there is some thought that needs to be put into the severity of the act. I think there is a need for clear rules and responsibilities for school boards to notify the Ontario College of Teachers with respect to that.

Allowing the Ontario College of Teachers to take swift action and share information with the school board if it is determined that the subject of the complaint may pose an immediate risk to the student: Again, what we would say is that we have to make sure the student is in a safe, healthy, nurturing environment to learn. It's not possible for students to be in a safe, healthy, nurturing environment to learn if they are under threat, and particularly if the teacher leading the discussion in the classroom may be the instigator or may be the person that is providing that anxiety to that student, based on a potential act.

We obviously want to make it as safe as possible for students to voice concerns, particularly when very serious offences have taken place. We see often in the media that victims of child sexual abuse have this reluctance to tell somebody that an act has taken place. Sometimes, we

see that five or 10 years later, when the child has had the strength to talk about those problems, this is when these are brought to light.

We have to make sure that what we're doing is protecting that student, to ensure they're in an environment that is optimal for learning, and that they're comfortable in telling people that something may have transpired that requires specific attention by the education system, the school board, the school and so on. There have to be some protections put in place for those students to feel that they are in a safe and nurturing environment.

We have to understand that sometimes, when there are very serious allegations at play, we actually do need to come in and we do need to step in. It might be a misunderstanding of sorts. There could be some elements such that an investigation may lead to a particular outcome that is positive or negative. But we have to make sure that, at the very outset, we're protecting students.

My wife, as I've mentioned before, is a child psychologist. The repercussions of having these students undergoing some serious and life-altering events have a negative effect on kids' mental health. We know that mental health has certainly been a push that we've been moving forward. I think all parties agree that we need to do more, particularly with children, to help to create an environment where the awareness of mental health issues is elevated. I think we have to have a process in recognizing that there are elements where we will have to act as swiftly as possible.

Imposing timelines to resolve cases at the investigation stage, when appropriate: One of the things that I had not known is that sometimes these cases would be never-ending in terms of their time of closure. They could be open for long periods of time, and nothing is being done with those cases. Of course, when you are the victim of a negative experience in the classroom, you want to make sure that the issue is being dealt with as quickly as possible, and that there is some deadline by which a report has to be rendered, a decision has to be rendered, on a particular case.

We appreciate that this legislation provides that timeline. Certainly, whenever you have timelines, you're going to debate whether the timeline is too long or too short, but at least we have an idea of when these items can be and should be discussed in an appropriate manner.

Another provision is to require that a panel hearing a matter relating to a principal or vice-principal must include a principal or vice-principal as well. Of course, the relationship with principals and vice-principals and our Ontario College of Teachers obviously has to be spelled out. There are issues where there are panels that investigate whether a principal or vice-principal is involved, and having an understanding from an administrator of a school's perspective on a matter, I think, is an important provision to underline as well.

One of the last things I want to talk about with this particular piece of legislation is that if a teacher has their certificate revoked, they can reapply and have their certificate reinstated after only five years. I would suggest

that members of our caucus are going to have some serious reservations about this particular provision. The fact that if someone has engaged in criminal misconduct, has engaged in sexual abuse and child pornography, and these items have been investigated and the certificate for teaching has been revoked—what we would suggest is that if you have engaged in a serious and violent sexual crime, you should never be in front of the classroom anymore. We're talking about protecting students in our classes. The very presence of somebody who has engaged in this activity is very, very serious.

What I would suggest is that word does get around. The fact is that we're going to be able to put these matters on a website. We're going to be able to put these disciplinary activities up for everybody to see. What would you do—what would any member of the Legislature do—if they knew that their kid's teacher had engaged, and was criminally involved, in a child sex crime? I know, as a parent, that there's no way I would want my student in that environment. There's no way.

So we have a bill here, a piece of legislation, that says we are protecting students—the Protecting Students Act, 2013—and we are adding a provision in this legislation that says that after five years that your certificate has been revoked, you can apply to become a teacher once again. As a father of three kids, this is a provision that I cannot accept. I cannot accept the fact that somebody who may be teaching my child has the ability to come back after five years and reapply to be a teacher, and could potentially be a teacher in a school once again.

If that happened in my child's school, I'm pretty sure that that teacher would never come back to that school. But that teacher might apply to another school; that teacher might apply to another school board. Even if that teacher doesn't come back to my child's school, he or she may be in another child's school. I would have serious reservations with any legislation that could potentially harm another child in another district, in another school board.

So I think we have to have a serious debate about this. This five-year reinstatement provision that's in this particular piece of legislation is, frankly, unacceptable, and I can say with a degree of certainty that members of the Ontario PC caucus, when speaking to this bill, will express their serious reservations about including a provision such as this in the legislation.

What I want to make very clear is that we are talking about people who have been investigated, who have been shown to have a manner or an activity that was questionable. They were investigated to the point that one of the items of penalty was the removal of their certificate of qualification to teach in the province of Ontario. So they have gone through a process whereby they had a serious offence and had their ability to teach in a school in Ontario revoked. Likely, there may have been a criminal process that was running parallel to what has transpired that may potentially have resulted in a charge.

0920

We cannot in good conscience talk about instituting a piece of legislation that, after a teacher has gone through

the process and that investigation has led to a disciplinary action so significant as the removal of their certificate of qualification to teach in the province of Ontario, we would even consider reinstating that certificate of qualification and putting children at potential risk. I would state, as I've mentioned, with a degree of certainty that members of the Ontario PC caucus, when debating this particular piece of legislation, will have serious reservations with this bill. We think that this provision needs a radical modification to suggest that if you have been found guilty of a child sex crime, you do not teach in a classroom in the province of Ontario ever again. That is where we stand with this piece of legislation.

We appreciate the fact that Justice LeSage has gone in depth with a very serious, very thoughtful report on how to improve the College of Teachers, the intake, investigation and discipline procedures and outcomes, and the dispute resolution process. We appreciate the work that he has done. We appreciate that many of the recommendations that were stated in that report have found their way, finally, into legislation. We are disappointed that included in those provisions is the potential of having someone who has been convicted of a child sex crime reinstated in our schools. We're disappointed that it has taken so long for this debate to resume, because nothing is more important, for myself as a father and as a legislator, than to protect our children. We should be debating this because it's so important to so many people.

Let's not forget the victims of these child sex acts and crimes. Let's not forget about the life-altering experience to the negative that these victims have had—thousands, tens of thousands of victims across the province and across the country. We cannot lose sight of what happens to them. We must do whatever we can to make sure that those acts do not happen to another child. We can do that by preventing those very people who have engaged in those acts from teaching in front of a classroom of young kids ever again. We would like to see this Legislature come out with a forceful statement on behalf of victims of sex crimes to suggest that these teachers do not teach in front of a classroom ever again, and until that time we cannot support this legislation.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to hear the previous speaker talk about this bill. I think he said some very good points, that at the core of it there are some young children who get hurt. When a child gets sexually abused, it stays with them for the rest of their life. Most of them will struggle for the rest of their lives. A few will make it through, and we're trying to learn from the ones who are able to cope. But for most of them, it means that this person—in this case here, this teacher—will have ruined this person's life for the rest of their life. You look at them through their lifetime and you will see that they will struggle throughout their lifetime. So the enormity of the crime is huge. How could you put it bigger than this? By your action, you ruin another person's life forever. Their opportunity to be happy, to be

productive, to have the life that everybody hopes for, is wiped away with one case of abuse. That's all it takes. If it's repeated, then the symptoms are way bigger.

Does it deserve fair punishment? Absolutely. But we have to find the right balance, where you punish those crimes to the full extent of the law, but at the same time, you protect teachers from being accused of a crime they did not commit.

The enormity of the crime is there. If they have committed abuse on children, they should be punished and I have no problem with this; live with the consequences of your actions. But if you did not, then—I don't think we've found the right balance yet.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I welcome this opportunity to take a couple of minutes to comment on the remarks made by the member from Cambridge on Bill 103.

In essence, what I heard him say was that generally he was supportive of the bill. I think we all share some very common values. We know that the vast majority of our teachers do an excellent job of supporting our students, but of course there are rare circumstances where the teachers do require discipline. They need a fair and transparent process.

In terms of some of the areas where he had some issues, first of all I want to point out that there are a couple of instances where our legislation has gone even further than Mr. Justice LeSage's recommendations. One of those is the mandatory revocation of a member's certificate for specific acts of sexual abuse or a prohibited act of child pornography under the Criminal Code. So our provision for mandatory revocation goes above and beyond Mr. Justice's LeSage's recommendations.

In terms of the reinstatement of the certificate that has been revoked for sexual abuse, sexual misconduct or a prohibited act, the legislation we're proposing says "for at least five years." I think it's important that we do have further discussion on this issue at committee. I'm informed that there has not been an instance, in fact, where a certificate has previously been reinstated. Of course, there's the additional fact that such a teacher with such a previous lifting of their certificate would have to convince the school board to actually hire them.

I think we do need further discussion on that, but we know from across the province, whether it be the Ontario Public School Boards' Association or the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario, we have had just very strong support for this particular legislation.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'm very pleased to stand up and speak to the member from Cambridge's comments on this bill. I actually listened with great interest to his comments, and I have to agree. I find it very troubling that there's any bill that allows for any allowance of any sexual predator into our classrooms after any period of time. I think if there's anything that didn't ever need any more conversation or any more consultation, it's allow-

ing sexual predators into our classrooms and into positions of trust after any period of time has passed, whether it's a year, five years or 10 years.

I can tell you with a great deal of certainty that if I knew that my child—I have two—was in a classroom with someone who has been charged and convicted of a sexual offence against a child, I would not be very happy about it. I don't think anyone who is a parent or anyone who cares a nickel about children would at all support allowing sexual predators—the possibility of a sexual predator—to be in a position of trust in a classroom, especially a teacher. I find that actually reprehensible.

I know we need to try to rehabilitate our criminals in society and all this. But you know what? The people they've affected—to get to the point where they're a convicted child sex offender, they've destroyed that child's life indefinitely, until the day they die. So to actually give them the leeway where they get five years and they can reapply to get a teacher's certificate to go back in the classroom isn't even remotely fair or square to the people they've hurt to get to that point in the first place.

If there's any piece of this bill that I don't think needs any more discussion in committee or needs any more discussion here, frankly, it's that provision that allows a teacher, after five years, to be able to have the possibility to stand in front of a classroom and influence young people. I think that in itself, in that bill, just that piece of it is reprehensible.

0930

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed an honour again to stand in this House today and to make a couple of comments on the riveting presentation put forward by the member from Cambridge.

I do recall that it was six months ago, I believe—October 1—when the member first stood and began his lead on this. What I took out of what he said this morning was this: Never let anyone in this House forget the victims, because when a child is abused, that lingers forever.

I had a friend who was caught up in the Mount Cashel scandal years ago in St. John's, Newfoundland. I didn't know it at the time or until later in life, when he wrote a book detailing what had gone on with his abuse at the hands of a teacher, a priest, back when we were hanging out. I can see now how that affected him throughout his life. I think we never want to forget that.

My kids are of an age now where they're having kids. I have two granddaughters now, and one coming at the end of the month. I just cannot accept anyone laying a finger or a hand on those kids. I don't know what I would do. I think I might do something I would be severely punished for, Speaker.

But the other part of this is to not forget due process. I know that if you name somebody too soon, that stigma sticks for life as well. You can never get past the fact that you were named. You may beat the charge eventually, but if you were named, that stigma is there for life. We have to keep an eye on that as well.

Thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Rob Leone: Once again, I'm pleased to also rise on behalf of my constituents of Cambridge. I know that every time the member for Windsor–Tecumseh speaks, he always mentions that. We should never forget the people who brought us here.

I'm also pleased that I finally got through my one-hour lead on this particular piece of legislation, after six months. I think that we're hitting a milestone here by debating a very important piece of legislation.

I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, the member for Barrie and the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for their thoughtful comments.

I think that what I'm sensing is a degree of interest in talking about getting this bill right. I think that that is obviously the important factor here, that so much of this bill is so necessary that we have to modify, update, bring up to 2014 and modernize the Ontario College of Teachers. I think everyone sees that there is a particular need for that, and certainly Justice LeSage has outlined that.

But as the member for Windsor–Tecumseh did say, we can't forget about the victims. This is, as many people have mentioned, a life-altering experience that a person will have. I say that not as a positive thing; I say that as a very negative thing. The repercussions on victims of child sex crimes are life-lasting and life-altering, and people have difficulty coping every day.

Like the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who is going to be a grandfather once again—and I congratulate him in advance for that—as a father, this is something that touches to the core of what we're doing here: protecting our kids every step of the way, each and every day that we're here.

I will take part and listen with interest to the debate of this bill. I encourage members to debate and talk about the process and how we can improve this piece of legislation.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to stand down the NDP lead on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex has requested unanimous consent to stand down his lead. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thank you very much, Speaker, and I thank my colleagues in the House for granting unanimous consent.

Of course, our critic, Peter Tabuns, is not here at the moment, unfortunately, but I know he anticipates, not with excitement—he is looking forward to speaking to the bill and relaying our concerns but our ultimate support for the provisions built into Bill 103, the Protecting Students Act.

Speaker, one of the things from the outset that I'd like to remind the House is that the bill was originally tabled

on October 1, 2013, a full—I heard six months. I haven't done the math, but it seems like quite a long time ago, half a year ago, when we first introduced any action on behalf of this House to address the nature of the provisions of the bill: protecting students from sexual assault in our schools.

I question the priorities of the government when we see such a long time between the introduction of the bill and our ability to speak to the bill. That being said, we do welcome the opportunity at this point and hope that we can come together in a productive way to work out the details and to of course hopefully make the bill stronger.

Every morning when we enter the House, those who have 9 a.m. House duty have the ability to pray with the Speaker and to join in a moment of reflection. This morning, I woke up knowing that I was to speak on this bill, and I took that moment of reflection the Speaker offered us to be pensive about what this bill means to the children in our communities, in our province, who are at school.

I had an overwhelming feeling of, I guess, discomfort, thinking about how vulnerable children are in society. As the father of two young children, and being away from home so much, it's not that I miss the good times with them, as a parent; it's that I have this overwhelming feeling of fear in not being able to be there all the time to protect my kids. I know every other parent in this place feels the same thing, that we are so far away for so long that we aren't able to offer that protection that I think is really the most important job a parent can do.

I also believe that protection of the public and safety of the public is the most important job that we can do, that we are charged with in this place; not simply tinkering with economic measures or the various other bills that come before this place. When they have an emphasis on public safety, and particularly the safety and welfare of children, it should be our paramount concern and our priority. Unfortunately, again, we see—I'll have to point out the lag time between the introduction of the bill and the fact that we're now just starting our leads on it. It doesn't bode too well in terms of the confidence that I have in the government to make this a priority. I'm happy to be able to express that sincerely.

The bill recognizes that children are vulnerable in our schools and that there are cases that exist still and may exist in the future that require us to take measures to enforce and to relay to abusers that we take this offence seriously. Particularly, sexual assault and violence against children is one of the most egregious and heinous crimes that a person could commit, not only in Ontario but around the world. I don't think there's any jurisdiction that sees these crimes as anything other than that. So it is incumbent upon us to do absolutely everything that we can to protect them in our school system and to have the mechanisms in place to allow those teachers, within due process, to be charged and to suffer ramifications and suffer the penalties—and they should be harsh. Because again—as I stated, being so far away—we drop off our kids every morning and trust. We give our most precious

goods to our educators and to the system, and trust that they in turn are protecting our children in the way that we would ourselves. This bill, I believe, gives them the tools to be able to do that. That's why New Democrats are supportive of the provisions of the bill but also, of course, seek to make it stronger and to enshrine and to codify the protection mechanisms and also the penalties that would be built within it.

0940

The amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act largely mirror the 49 recommendations from the 2012 LeSage report. I want to commend the member from Cambridge, who is the critic for the official opposition, who I think had a well-nuanced speech on this bill. I think it was really not the partisan type of rhetoric that we would normally expect around all the bills. He took a very clear approach to what the mechanisms do and how they would work, and I want to commend him on doing that. I certainly appreciate the information that I learned from him today. So thank you to the member from Cambridge.

We seek to work with all members in the House to bring this bill, hopefully expedite the bill, to committee, where we can have a more nuanced debate and discussion, and take in more information, to ensure that we aren't missing anything. In that, I think New Democrats hold the provisions of due process at the top. In our Criminal Code, we value due process. It is something that jurisdictions around the world look to us to seek guidance on, whether it be at the Supreme Court level or even simply in our provincial courts. We know that our process, in large effect, works well. We can discuss the punitive measures ad nauseam here, but let's ensure that process is there and that the rights and responsibilities of everyone are protected.

Many members made reference to ensuring that the identities of the accused prior to being found guilty or convicted should be protected, and I don't think anyone can argue that fact. We simply have to run the potential scenario through our heads and understand the ramifications of being found guilty before due process. That's something that I think we all understand in this House.

Of course, on the punitive side, I can't argue with the member from Cambridge when he says, "How can we, in fact, allow someone who has been found guilty of a heinous crime against a child back into the system, knowing that there is a chance of them repeating that?" I understand that argument. I understand it outside of the context of our education system. I understand that if someone—a murder case, a case of abuse that doesn't involve a child; we certainly can't understand, as civil people, as civil members of our society, that anyone should have the same rights or continue to have the same rights, especially when they've created so much long-lasting physiological and psychological damage to someone else.

But Speaker, we do live in a civil society where we recognize that we have systems, we have due process in our courts that allows people to redeem themselves, allows people to try to recover and allows people to pay

their debt to society. Whether they do life in prison, or 20 years or 15 years, that is something that is recognized at all levels of our court: that we have a punitive system and that we also allow them to pay their debt. It's one that I look forward to hearing on both sides of the spectrum at committee. It's one that I think is a debate that the broader public should have. But it's one that is very contentious and, again, I took that moment this morning to reflect on that nature. It's one that I can only imagine other members in this House are doing the same as they read the contents of this bill.

That provision would be the most contentious provision in the bill. Other than that, I think that many of them involve amendments, again, to the Ontario College of Teachers Act based on the LeSage report: one ensuring that a teacher's certificate is automatically revoked if he or she has been found guilty of sexual abuse or acts relating to child pornography, and that the teacher can apply for reinstatement after five years. Of course, I just mentioned that it's one we will need to debate and discuss and take in broader information about.

Again, I hope that we relay that to the people in our constituencies, because ultimately, they have sent us here to make these decisions. Let's take in as much information from them as possible to make an informed and wise decision that follows, again, the principles of due process in our court system, in our legal system.

In other provisions, "Requiring school boards to inform the college when they have restricted a teacher's duties or dismissed him or her for misconduct;" as well, "Allowing the college to share information with the school board if the subject of a complaint poses an immediate risk to a student"—I think that that makes sense. An information system to the schools is a safeguard that may relay some confidence to the public and to parents and one that I think makes some sense.

"—Requiring the college to publish all decisions from its discipline committee;

"—Imposing new timelines to resolve cases more quickly and efficiently;

"—Avoiding potential conflicts of interest by preventing union or association representatives from sitting on the college's council, where college policy is developed and approved;

"—Requiring that a disciplinary panel include a principal or vice-principal when hearing a matter relating to the conduct of a principal or vice-principal."

Now, those two provisions there will be interesting to hear more about. I look forward to potentially hearing from the Minister of Education about the effects of those provisions: "requiring a disciplinary panel include a principal or vice-principal when hearing a matter relating to the conduct of a principal or vice-principal." I'm assuming that we will want to take in some institutional knowledge of someone who is in that same position when a disciplinary panel is enacted. That makes sense to me.

But on the other side, just prior to that provision is "avoiding potential conflicts of interest by preventing union or association representatives from sitting on the

college's council, where college policy is developed or approved." I wonder if those two principles conflict, because unions or associations have an obligation to represent the labour rights of a teacher or of their representative. They also have a fiduciary responsibility when there are economic impacts on that worker, and it's not to say that those representatives on the unions or associations wouldn't, in fact, be on side or would really be biased. I don't think anybody would think that anyone would be biased, but I think they have an obligation to be represented there. I wonder if we're missing an opportunity, again, to ensure there is due process and that all relevant bodies are represented when such an important situation is occurring, that we've covered all of our bases and all input has been taken in.

Again, I believe that this bill is something that is warranted, and it warrants our immediate attention and warrants us to make it a priority. I hope that the bill receives, again, an expedited emphasis in this House where the minister makes it a priority and keeps the pressure on this so that we can ensure and infuse some confidence into the broader public, into parents like myself and like the member from Cambridge, like all others who rely on our public school system to provide a good-quality, safe education for our children but also protects them and understands that it is a universe that should be one that promotes the education of children and not, in fact, puts them into vulnerable situations.

Unfortunately, we have some historical reference of where systems have failed our children at large. We have, as the member from Windsor–Tecumseh spoke, the Mount Cashel event, and we have the history of the residential school system in Canada, where so many native children were abused, and we seek reparation for that. We seek to ensure that that never happens again. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is just finalizing their report and submissions. We've heard really, really touching testimony on how the system failed.

0950

Here is an opportunity for us to ensure that that never happens again within our public education system. It's one that I believe is welcomed by all members of this House. It's a conversation that has really not had an opportunity to be spoken about at large, because—I really don't know why we haven't. So many times in this building, politics gets in the way of policy, which is really unfortunate. Here's an opportunity for us to show the people out there that we can actually do the right thing.

I certainly offer my assistance to the minister and to the government to ensure that this bill receives passage but also that it receives full scrutiny and complies with due process in our democratic process, and also is as strong as it possibly can be, within the Charter of Rights—because we have to be cognizant of that too, of course—but also that all of the provisions that our families out there are asking us to put into the bill are fleshed out and reviewed.

Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity. I truly appreciate standing up and giving some comments here.

M^{me} France Gélinas: En français, deux minutes?

M. Taras Natyshak: En français, deux minutes? Ça va être difficile pour moi de le faire en français pour deux minutes—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ah non?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Non.

I certainly hope that members have understood where we're coming from, here on the Ontario New Democratic side. I welcome comments from my colleagues.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to comment on the remarks by the member from Essex.

I wanted to pick up on a theme that he mentioned, which was co-operation on this. Every so often, this Legislature amazes me when we come together to do the right thing, and I hope that this is going to be one of these areas.

Mr. Justice LeSage made a number of recommendations. This legislation is around implementing those recommendations. I think we've heard, in some way or another, from all three parties that there is a lot of consensus around supporting what Mr. Justice LeSage told us and these recommendations.

I want to report to you, Speaker, that we have also had a lot of consensus within the system. We've worked very closely with the College of Teachers to implement the recommendations that could be done without legislation. We have also had a lot of co-operation from the various stakeholder organizations in the education sector. So I hope that we can all, both outside this House and inside this House, come together and make this happen quickly.

Just on some of the specific topics that the member from Essex mentioned: He mentioned the matter of frivolous and vexatious complaints. There's no doubt that the College of Teachers gets complaints against teachers which are not founded. One of the things that the legislation does is allow the registrar of the college to deal with the frivolous and vexatious and get it out of the way more expeditiously so that you're not taking an innocent teacher and dragging them through the mud.

On the matter of serious sexual misconduct, on the other hand, we have actually gone further than Mr. Justice LeSage recommended and have required mandatory revocation of the licence.

The member raised a couple of other issues. One is the matter of members of teacher union executives not sitting on the governing board of the college, and another is having principals sit on review committees when a principal is subject to review. Actually, in both cases, the same principles are at play. The purpose of the college is to protect the public, i.e. kids. On the other hand, when you come to review, you should have review by your peers. So the principles are consistent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: This has been an interesting day today. I'm quite impressed by the member from Essex,

his collegial nature and his comments on our critic, Mr. Leone's remarks from earlier this morning.

Mr. Leone, of course, is a teacher; he's a university professor. He spoke of his family—he has a PhD. There are different descriptions of what that acronym stands for.

But I'd just say this: I think there's agreement here. This bill, again, is another example of the Wynne-McGuinty government trying to slip something in here. This is what concerns me. It troubles me. The bill itself is in response to Justice LeSage—we're all familiar with where the genesis of this came from—but I've heard it from my constituents as well.

The suspicious nature—when we're dealing with children, there should be no tolerance. If someone has violated—if the crime has been proven, there should be process. We agree with that as well.

The college itself is backed by the union, basically. I hate to say that. In the Royal Commission on Learning that was done by the NDP some years ago, it said that the college should be a professional college, like doctors and nurses, to make it a real profession. But now it's dominated by the unions so that the number of votes are—I'm a little off topic there; they need to be at arm's length. If the court has found them guilty, they should never be allowed in a classroom again. Okay? They should be on the list of sexual offenders, predators, if it's been proven in court.

At the same time, teachers are exposed to vulnerable accusations from people who have other motives. Because I know—my wife and daughter and other members of my family are teachers—it's a tough job, a very difficult job. But they are leaders, and in that role, they're respected and they're held in esteem. And if one of them violates it, it's ruining the whole profession, so they should be dealt with swiftly and firmly. That's why I can't support the bill under section 6—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

M. Michael Mantha: Ça me fait plaisir de me lever et d'ajouter des commentaires à ceux de mon collègue d'Essex, qui a donné un vraiment bon aperçu du projet de loi et des « concerns » qu'on a comme parti néo-démocrate. Mais aussi, un des sujets qu'il a apporté à notre attention ce matin c'est les priorités du gouvernement. Quand on regarde ce projet de loi-ci, qui a été présenté au mois d'octobre, voilà six mois, ce qui est beaucoup de temps, c'est un projet de loi qui « deserves » l'attention nécessaire. C'est important car on parle de nos enfants à l'école. Nous voilà où nous avons eu un vraiment bon projet de loi dont on devrait discuter, mais ça fait six mois qu'on ne s'en est pas parlé. Ce que nous questionnons comme parti néo-démocrate : où sont les priorités du gouvernement?

L'autre sujet qu'il a apporté à l'attention de la Chambre, c'est le processus, et faire certain qu'il y a une méthode pour questionner et faire une investigation, non seulement pour la personne qui est probablement coupable d'actions inappropriées envers nos enfants,

mais faire certain aussi que les plaintes qui ne sont pas justifiées sont aussi explorées pour faire certain que la bonne représentation est donnée à ces personnes-là, tout en gardant l'idée en tête qu'il y a un processus.

On a une cour judiciaire pour prendre soin des personnes qui sont trouvées coupables et puis que jamais, jamais, on n'excuse que les personnes trouvées coupables—qu'elles sont traitées à la plus haute démarche de notre loi et puis qu'elles absorbent toute pénitence envers elles sur leurs actions envers nos enfants.

Avec ça, aussi, mon collègue et moi avons regardé les implémentations du rapport de M. LeSage. Oui, il y a beaucoup de ces implémentations-là qu'on regarde à implémenter. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 103. I want to thank and recognize the thousands of teachers in our public school system across Ontario in terms of supporting our students' learning needs.

Today is the 63rd annual Sounds of Toronto, a high school music concert at Roy Thomson Hall. Every year it is a successful event bringing all high school students together to perform. I know that hundreds of teachers and students across the Toronto District School Board have volunteered in supporting our student learners. So I want to do a shout-out for them.

1000

With regard to Bill 103, it is there to support and protect our students' safety. This is of utmost importance. As a former school board trustee, I recognize the importance of the students' safety, because without safety in our classrooms, without safety in our school environment, a child cannot learn. The proposed legislation, if passed, will ensure greater transparency, accountability and efficiency in terms of the teacher disciplinary process, and furthermore, it lines up with other self-regulated professions. I'm not sure the member for Durham understands that. At present, in the College of Nurses, as a member of the College of Nurses, if a member is found guilty in terms of sexual abuse: automatic revoking of the licence to practise—end of story. They have to be proven before the courts and there's a due process that the member talked about earlier.

The other piece here is in the explanatory note. I'm not sure that some of the members have read it. I want to read it on record. Section 3, of the explanatory note: "The new subsection 17(2.1) provides that a panel of a committee that hears or reviews a matter relating to a principal or vice-principal must include at least one person who is or was a principal or vice-principal." Again, that ensures transparency.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the Minister of Education for clarifying some of my questions. Again, I look forward to having, a little bit, even, a clearer perspective on these two provisions when it comes to the re-

forms to who is represented on the college and also—but I do understand the nature of having someone, a principal, attend a disciplinary panel. So thank you for that, members from Durham, Scarborough—Agincourt et mon ami, le membre pour Algoma—Manitoulin.

Again, I can't reiterate enough that this should be a priority in this House for all members. I will do my part to ensure that our caucus and our party applies enough pressure on the government to make it a priority. I see it as something that I think will resonate within the broader community and parents across Ontario, one that is needed, of course, to promote safe schools, to promote the values that we hold near and dear to our school system—that it is a safe place and we do not accept any form of abuse. We do not tolerate it, and we will impart or push the full extent of the law, and use the full extent of the law, and strengthen those laws to ensure that our children feel safe and our families and parents and feel safe sending our kids to school, and that it is an environment where only learning and love and happiness exists. This is how we can do it, through some of the mechanisms in this bill.

I look forward to it receiving a vote through second reading and going to committee, where we can hear more testimony from experts who I'm sure are looking forward to discussing this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise to join the debate around Bill 103, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 with respect to discipline and other related matters. The lawyers are probably happy with that one, but I think I'll stick with the snappier name, the Protecting Students Act.

This legislation is, of course, geared to making certain key changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, and reflects some of the important recommendations of the Honourable Patrick J. LeSage, stemming from his 2011-12 review of the college's investigation and disciplinary procedures, the outcomes of same and also dispute resolution programs. In August 2011, he was retained by the Ontario College of Teachers to review its intake, investigation and discipline procedures and outcomes, and its dispute resolution program, and to consider whether or not they protect the public interest.

He was also asked, more specifically, to examine and consider issues including communication and publication practices; impartiality and timelines; training and legal support; appropriateness of disciplinary outcomes; confidentiality; and the handling of concerns about its members. As part of that process, he undertook discussions with key stakeholder groups and other interested parties and reviewed relevant reports.

Some of the recommendations of that report have been acted on already. Last January, the college began posting the outcomes of disciplinary procedures on their website, in the interests of transparency. But of course, some of the recommendations require legislative change, which is why we are debating Bill 103 here today.

As Justice LeSage noted in his report, it is an enormous privilege to self-regulate. As John F. Kennedy once said, to whom much is given, much is expected.

In his report, Justice LeSage concluded that the college faces two essential challenges: transparency and efficiency. Moreover, the college, like any self-regulating body, is in place first and foremost to safeguard the public interest. To this end, all of his recommendations focus on allowing the college to be more transparent and efficient, thereby serving the public interest most effectively. These are measures designed to enhance parents' confidence in the system; empower educators themselves to regulate their own profession more effectively; and improve and optimize the investigation and disciplinary process, which had become burdensome and non-transparent over time.

It is also hoped that Justice LeSage's report will help differentiate, in the minds of the public and parents, the distinct roles and functions of the College of Teachers and individual school boards. It is hoped that this increased understanding improves not just institutional transparency but also familiarity, comfort, confidence and trust.

So we turn to Bill 103. Were the bill before us to be approved, all of Justice LeSage's 49 recommendations would be implemented, either through the proposed statutory amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, and associated regulations, or by the Ontario College of Teachers through bylaw or policy.

Some of the notable provisions of Bill 103 include:

- publishing all decisions of the college's discipline committee;

- outlining clear rules for the use of the alternative dispute resolution process, and confirming that no cases involving sexual abuse, sexual misconduct or child pornography would be eligible for alternative dispute resolution;

- clarifying when school boards must inform the Ontario College of Teachers of cases where the board has restricted the duties of a teacher or dismissed them for misconduct;

- empowering the Ontario College of Teachers to take swift action and share information with the school board if it is determined that the subject of the complaint may pose an immediate risk to the student;

- imposing timelines to resolve cases at the investigation stage, when appropriate;

- requiring that a panel hearing a matter relating to a principal or vice-principal must include a principal or vice-principal; and

- ensuring a teacher's certificate is automatically revoked if they have been found guilty of specific acts of sexual abuse, or for acts relating to child pornography.

1010

On this final point, I should note, as other members of my caucus have, that if a teacher has their certificate revoked, they are at liberty to reapply and have their certificate reinstated after a five-year period has passed. This is a jarring and unsettling detail, Speaker. The notion that

teachers who have ruined the lives of children will be able to rejoin the ranks of educators after just five years is problematic. I think most parents, and indeed most people across Ontario, would argue that this penalty is far too flimsy. We must ensure that tougher penalties are in place for those who target and take advantage of the most vulnerable among us.

The repercussions of these kinds of incidents can linger for years, if not a lifetime. Just as the influence of an exceptional teacher can open a young person to new possibilities, a negative influencer such as an abuser could wall them off and skew their entire world view.

Childhood and adolescence is a formative period, as we are all well aware, and Bill 103 does not appear to truly take that to heart. We need to protect students from violence, both sexual and nonsexual, and the idea that a teacher who has committed such an act could go back to work after five years is chilling, to be perfectly frank.

In addition to this glaring flaw, I think that the detail around incident reporting could be made more robust. It is essential that we do our best to ensure that our young people are safe.

While I was encouraged to hear the minister speak about the need for an open and transparent investigative process with regard to cases of sexual abuse or child pornography, I would suggest that making this aspect of the process stronger and fairer only raises more questions about why the penalties attached to these offences are so slight. If the most even-handed and level-headed legal process concludes that a teacher has committed these grossly inappropriate or indecent acts, why then would we leave the door open to the possibility of repeat offences?

As it turns out, we have heard government members speak out along these same lines, saying we need to make sure that type of situation is never repeated again. The minister herself indicated as much, saying, “We don’t believe there is any reasonable circumstance where there is a confirmed case of sexual abuse or child pornography where a teacher should be able to keep their teaching certificate.”

This invites the question: If that is indeed the government’s thinking, why has this legislation included the five-year reinstatement provision? Is it a failsafe against an investigative and review mechanism that is sufficiently flawed that measures such as this are needed? Is it because on some level they worry that in rare cases the complaints process invites abuse for false complaints? If that is so, maybe we need to go over these aspects of the legislation and repair them at source so that the legislation serves both students and educators to the best of its ability. This bill does not go nearly far enough. Steeper and stiffer penalties will draw the lines clearly and protect professional standards.

For our part, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party would prohibit any teacher found to have committed sexual violence against a student from having their certificate reinstated. We owe that much peace of mind to Ontario parents and to children.

At the same time, we also can’t offer enough praise for the excellent work that our educators do, often under trying circumstances and while trying to balance a range of interests. We are blessed to have the perspective of a number of educators and school board trustees in this very Legislature. In our own caucus, I believe there are a number of former teachers and members either married or related to teachers. This seasons their debate and helps to really enrich the quality of discussion around bills such as this one before us today.

Teachers, of course, are regularly called to go above and beyond, and to that benefit of our children and our society they do so unflinchingly. We have all seen the limits of this conviction in tragic news stories around school shootings where teachers have laid down their lives for—

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s my pleasure to introduce Don Standen, his son, Matt Standen, and a local reporter from our area, Denis Langlois. Welcome to Queen’s Park and have a fabulous day.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I’d like to introduce, sitting in the west members’ gallery, Thomas Blackmore, who is here today to watch the proceedings. Welcome to Queen’s Park, Thomas.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I just noticed that Tim Jones from Artscape is here. I’d like to welcome him to the chamber today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I’d like to welcome Jason Nicol to the public galleries today. Jason is the father of our page from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Kathryn Nicol. Welcome, Jason.

Hon. Michael Coteau: On behalf of my colleague from Don Valley West, I’d like to introduce Myung Joo Kim, mother of Justin Kim, who will be joining us later today in the members’ gallery.

Mr. Rob Leone: I notice that my good friend Tommy Blackmore is here today to witness question period in its fine form.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s my pleasure today to welcome, in the west gallery later this morning, members from the company TransAlta, from Alberta, who are visiting us here today—and many members have installations in their ridings—they are: Mr. Brian Heaman and Ms. Laura Arnold. I ask you to welcome them to the Legislature today.

Mrs. Gila Martow: A class from Thornlea public school in my riding is supposed to be visiting today. I’m not sure if they made it yet, but I wanted to introduce them.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a special welcome to Mr. Wayne Clancy, who is president and chief innovation officer for Future Strategies Inc.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to draw the attention of the members of the assembly to Mr. Don Jaffray, the executive director of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton. He's also a member of our cabinet committee on poverty reduction. He's here to watch the House today.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome Tim Jones from Artscape, Meagan Boyle and Clark Rabbior to the Legislature this morning. Welcome, Tim, to your first question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to draw the attention of the House to the Speaker's gallery. With us, we have a former member from the 37th, 38th, 39th—and Speaker for the 39th—Parliament, from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Speaker Steve Peters—my other brother that's not Joe.

Also in the Speaker's gallery, I have visitors from the riding of Brant: the manager of developmental services for the Family Counselling Centre of Brant, Mr. Keith Anderson, and his guest, Robert Rowe. Welcome, and we're glad you're here with us.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Acting Premier: Today the OPP claimed that they don't know exactly when 20 of the 24 computers were illegally accessed by Peter Faist. How can you stand in this assembly and say definitively that no computers were accessed after February 11 when the OPP stated today they could have been accessed up until March 20? Can you tell me exactly what you know that the OPP doesn't?

Hon. John Milloy: I think members of the Legislature are aware that an officer with the Ontario Provincial Police appeared in front of the justice committee this morning. He had two messages for that committee. The first is that the investigation is centred on the former chief of staff to Premier McGuinty and that, in fact, it had nothing to do with the current Premier. In fact, I invite members to go on the Globe and Mail website. They may enjoy the headline of the article that's up about that appearance, "No Evidence Wynne Oversaw Document Purge, OPP Says."

The second thing, and this is just as important, that the OPP conveyed to the committee is that politicians should stay out of OPP investigations, that politicians have no business in OPP investigations and that a politician getting involved in an OPP investigation may, in fact, put that investigation in jeopardy. Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member should follow the advice of the Ontario Provincial Police.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would suggest that the honourable minister actually check the transcripts. I actually sat through committee, and here's what else he said. He said those computers could have been accessed up until March 20. He said that the Premiers' transition from Mr. McGuinty to Ms. Wynne happened almost immediately. He said that people that were staffing the transition between Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty happened almost on a daily basis. He also said he enjoyed appearing before our committee.

I'm going to ask you again: what could you possibly know about the access of these computers that the OPP doesn't know? How can you stand here in the Legislature and say without a shadow of a doubt that no computers were wiped under the watch of the Wynne administration? Are you now taking a page out of Laura Miller's book and calling the OPP liars?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. I know that this is a certain time in our history where things get heated. I'm going to offer caution to all members. There is my concern about parliamentary language, and let's just make sure we don't go there.

The Acting Premier.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm quite happy to quote from officer Duval of the Ontario Provincial Police, who appeared in front of the committee. Let me give one exchange he had with the member from Toronto–Danforth. Here is the quote: "I can tell you that based on the information-to-obtain that I produced, it's centred on the action of Mr. David Livingston only."

I'd also like to share with the honourable members what the officer had to say as well: "I've been an officer for 17 years. It is an unusual request for a detective or an investigator to testify on the evidence that's been uncovered, as we are doing during this investigation. It's very unusual. But please understand that if you require me to answer questions on specific evidence, I could potentially threaten the prosecution on any criminal offences that may resolve from this investigation. There is a significant public interest in preserving the integrity of a criminal investigation."

I know that the honourable member likes staying up late watching Ellery Queen on television, but let's leave this to the Ontario Provincial Police.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I actually have a Netflix program for the minister to watch, *Orange Is the New Black*. I hope you look good in orange.

I'd like to say this to the minister: What the OPP detective constable also said to the assembly is that while David Livingston is right now the person of interest, they could potentially expand their search warrants as well as potential ITOs. That means you're not out of the clear yet, my friend.

I have a question for the Acting Premier. If they're so concerned—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education will come to order, the Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order, and it's a little late, but the Minister of the Environment will come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Why didn't the government launch an internal investigation into the destruction of documents, or the alleged destruction of documents, after the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, stated in her report in June 2013 that that had happened? Were you afraid of what the results might be because you knew Peter Faist was still on the payroll with the Liberal Party?

1040

Hon. John Milloy: I would remind the member that when the Information and Privacy Commissioner's report came out, we responded almost immediately to all of her non-legislative recommendations. Action was taken to put in place the proper regime for record-keeping. I would also point her to a piece of legislation which has been introduced in this Legislature which responds to some of the legislative recommendations of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

This Premier—

Interjection.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Premier Wynne has taken her obligation very, very seriously, and we have seen significant activity over the past year to make sure that documents are properly maintained by this government.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Acting Premier: It's very clear that the Premier did not take her job seriously. She pretends she wasn't Premier of Ontario for six weeks between February and March of last year.

On March 19, your deputy director of human resources, Emily Marangoni, advised the manager of information technology to remove the special administrative rights used by Peter Faist. How did Emily Marangoni know to have this access removed on March 19, and why did she do so on March 19? Answer the question.

Hon. John Milloy: Let's go back to this morning. We had an officer of the Ontario Provincial Police appear in front of the committee—he himself admitted that this is an extraordinary situation—in which he outlined two things. First of all, the investigation involves Mr. David Livingston—there are allegations which are not proven; this is a very serious matter—and the time in which Premier McGuinty was in office. The second thing that he stressed is that it is not for members of Parliament, it is not for elected politicians, to try to play amateur detective here.

Let us allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work. They will reach whatever conclusions they reach, and then we will be in a position to respond.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If the Acting Premier wants to talk about amateur hour, he should read the ITO reference to his government and their previous Premier and what bureaucrats said about their government.

But anyway, I will go back to this: What we know is that the OPP could charge further individuals. We do know computers could have been accessed up until March 20. We do know that the Premier's transition took place almost immediately, and it confirmed that when Kathleen Wynne won the leadership on January 26, she took access to that office almost immediately.

When was the first time the Premier, the Minister of Government Services, who is also the House leader, and the Deputy Premier met with David Livingston or any member of her transition team to discuss the deleted emails and the gas plants scandal? Let us know, please.

Interjections.

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

Acting Premier?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I will go to Officer Duval of the Ontario Provincial Police and quote his words: "I can tell you that based on the information to obtain that I've produced, it centred"—obviously he means the investigation—"on the action of Mr. David Livingston only." In fact, the member from Toronto-Danforth goes on and says, "Have more warrants been executed than this?" And the officer says, "No."

You're not getting anywhere across the way with this. Again, let me remind members what some of the media are saying about this dog and pony show. Globe and Mail, April 1: "The Conservative leader's aggressive attempts to score points without the facts to back them up are reminding Ontario voters why they haven't warmed up to him."

The Toronto Star, April 1: The Leader of the Opposition "went far beyond what the facts show."

Toronto Star, April 1: "Every time" the leader—

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

Hon. John Milloy: I can go on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you can't. Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality here is that this is a government that is not telling the true story to the people of this province. They're not telling the whole story to the people of this province; it is very clear from the OPP's ITO. We know, for example, that these computers could have been accessed up until March 20. We know that the transition took place very quickly between the former Premier and the current Premier. We know, for example, that many members of that former Premier's staff are still working with this government, including in that minister's office.

Now, let's talk about David Nicholl. You threw him under the bus yesterday. When is Kathleen Wynne going to send you out of town, too?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy, I'm trying to address. As I warned earlier, this is getting desperately close. That was too close for my comfort, and I'll ask the member—and all members—to refrain from making any references whatsoever to truth-telling.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm a very patient individual. I'll quote Officer Duval once again. In an exchange with the member from Toronto–Danforth about the investigation, he said, “I can tell you that based on the information to obtain that I produced, it's centred”—meaning the investigation—“on the actions of Mr. David Livingston only.”

But let me go back to my quotes. I never thought I'd do this, but I'm going to quote Margaret Wente in this morning's *Globe*: “Despite the rantings of the Progressive Conservative leader ... there's nothing to link” the Premier “to the gas plant scandal....”

“Even my conservative friends ... think” the Leader of the Opposition “is bad news. He comes across as a small-town bully. His political misjudgments just keep piling up. His attacks on” the Premier “over the gas plant scandal are both shrill and unnecessary.”

I think Margaret Wente speaks for herself.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Does the Liberal government believe that Liberal operatives should be offering their full co-operation to the OPP's investigation into the gas plant scandal?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I will go to the OPP officer, Mr. Duval, who appeared in front of the committee, and I will provide a quote of what he said this morning: “It is my understanding, however, that the OPP has received co-operation from senior government officials in this matter. There has never been an issue.”

The government has provided full co-operation. In terms of the committee itself, members are aware that the Premier has appeared several times; I've appeared in front of the committee; the Minister of Energy. We are offering the fullest co-operation to the Ontario Provincial Police as they undertake this very important undertaking.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact is, this morning at committee, the OPP confirmed that Liberal operatives, including one who worked for the Ontario Liberal Party up until this very weekend, declined to provide a statement to the OPP. Does the Acting Premier think that's acceptable?

Hon. John Milloy: I would urge anyone who the OPP approaches to be fully co-operative. As I said, on this side of the Legislature, when it comes to anyone who is involved with or works for our government, we have

been fully co-operative. The OPP confirmed that this morning.

I think there have been other references that were made in front of the committee about the co-operation with this government. We certainly take this matter seriously, but at the same time, I provide the same caution to the leader of the third party: What we learned this morning from the Ontario Provincial Police is that it's best for politicians not to involve themselves in an investigation and to allow the OPP to reach conclusions independently and not jeopardize the proceedings.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Can the Acting Premier tell us why key Liberal operatives, Liberals who he and his team worked with for many years and through many campaigns, may have refused to talk to police? Does he know why they would have wanted to refuse to talk to police?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, all I can do is quote the officer—I apologize to the inspector; I should have used his proper title. Inspector André Duval with the OPP said, “It is my understanding, however, that the OPP has received co-operation from senior government officials in this matter.”

The OPP have clearly stated at the committee this morning, and also in the documents before the court, that in this case the accusations are against one person—they are unfounded accusations—Mr. David Livingston, the former chief of staff to the former Premier. The OPP obviously has freedom to ask or question any individual. Of course, I would encourage everyone to co-operate fully with them.

Speaking on behalf of the government, I can say that our government is co-operating, as was outlined by Inspector Duval this morning.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. We learned today that the government's own cybersecurity unit was conducting an active internal investigation of the wiping of data in the Premier's office. Was the Premier's office aware of this?

1050

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, there is an active OPP investigation going on. As has been outlined in the documents that were produced on Thursday in the court, it involves the actions of the former chief of staff to the former Premier, Mr. David Livingston. They are serious allegations; everyone acknowledges that. They are unproven.

What we learned at committee this morning are two things. First of all, they involved that period of time when Premier McGuinty was Premier, not the current Premier. The second is that we should not be conducting police investigations here on the floor of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That's why they should have called a public inquiry a year ago, Speaker.

The Premier has indicated that she was in the dark about key details of computers being wiped in the Premier's office until newspaper reports emerged, Speaker. Now, how is that possible if the government's own cybersecurity unit was investigating?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, last Thursday, there were some documents made public about an investigation that was being undertaken by the Ontario Provincial Police. That document spoke about one individual who there are accusations about, and that was confirmed in front of the committee this morning. What it said, Mr. Speaker, was that they were pursuing these accusations, potential wrongdoing on the course of Mr. David Livingston, the former chief of staff to the former Premier. What we heard this morning, Mr. Speaker, was a confirmation of that. It did not involve the current Premier, who has answered numerous questions here in the Legislature and to the media.

The other piece of advice, Mr. Speaker, is that politicians should keep their noses out of this, and we shouldn't be having a police investigation here on the floor of the Legislature.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, Speaker, I hope the Liberals have learned a lot more than that from what's going on with the gas plant scandal cover-up.

Speaker, the Liberal government keeps insisting that they will be open and accountable—that they are open and accountable—and that they will be sharing all information. But what people see are key Liberal operatives refusing to respond to OPP requests for interviews and a Premier who is frantically firing people and acting shocked when the public hears details of multiple investigations going on under her nose and in her office.

Is this the brand of Liberal accountability that the people of Ontario expect? Is this good enough for the people of Ontario?

Hon. John Milloy: No, Mr. Speaker, what they are seeing is theatrics on the part of the opposition, who are trying to position themselves as police officers. This is a very serious matter, and the fact of the matter is, there is a tradition in this province that when the police are undertaking their work, politicians get out of their way.

I have some quotes for the NDP as well. Let me quote the Toronto Star on March 30: The leader of the NDP "indulged in conventional opposition mischief by implying police were 'now focusing on questions about the period after'" the Premier was "'sworn in and became Premier'—a clear misreading of the OPP documents."

The Globe and Mail, March 31: "There is nothing in the documents that suggests any records were deleted after Ms. Wynne was sworn into office on February 11, 2013."

Let's let these third parties speak for themselves in the analysis of the mischief that is going on from the opposition.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan American Games. Minister, you've commissioned a shipyard in Belfast, Maine, to custom-build you a 45-foot limousine boat for the games. Let me remind you: Limousine boating is not a Pan Am sport. Neither is exotic Liberal spending.

Since there's no limo boat line item in the Pan Am budget, can you please tell the taxpayers, Minister, how much will this ship cost?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, another question, another—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Michael Chan: —the Pan/Parapan American Games. Speaker, what the member opposite is doing is, he wants to tear down the Hamilton stadium; he wants to tear down the Milton Velodrome; he wants to tear down the aquatic centre; he wants to tear down the athletes' village.

The members opposite, Speaker, want to run down our athletes who have been training their whole lives to compete in these games. They want to run down the coaches who prepare our great athletes. They want to run down our games planners and everything they work so hard for. Speaker, they want to tear down our relationships with PASO nations. They want to tear down the spirit of the games.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Minister, if there is anyone responsible for tearing down and destroying the spirit of the Pan Am Games, it's you.

Minister, hiding spending doesn't reduce spending. You have awarded yet another foreign contract, to Trefoil Marine, to build your lavish limo boat plus three water taxis. Clearly, you don't know anything about this, so let me fill you in. This company is renowned for tech-savvy and high cost. Even the company president has said, "People would look at the price and say, 'They're out of their mind,' but that's the price they go for." And just because you want to be cool in front of your dignitary friends doesn't mean you can help yourself to unlimited taxpayer funds.

Minister, I'm going to ask you again: How much money is your limo boat costing to build, transport here, and operate?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do.

Carry on.

Hon. Michael Chan: We are working very hard to deliver the Pan Am Games. According to the president of PASO, the international body for Pan Am—the president said, "Ontario will host the best-ever Pan and Parapan American Games"—in Ontario.

Look at our standing. So far, the capital projects are all on time, on budget or under budget. Recently, we re-forecasted the budget down \$49 million. That's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Chan: Recently, again, we rolled out the transportation framework and we rolled out the security framework. We are building the best-ever games in Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. When Peter Faist was allegedly in the Premier's office deleting emails, he had a contract with the Liberal Party and the Liberal caucus.

Can the Acting Premier tell Ontarians who was paying Peter Faist for his work at that time? Was it the Liberal Party or the caucus?

Hon. John Milloy: As I say, Mr. Speaker, I'm a very, very patient individual. We have commented before on Peter Faist and his work that he did for the Liberal caucus under the former Premier, and the work that he did under the Ontario Liberal Party.

The honourable member is standing up here today and asking what I believe are detailed questions related to an ongoing police investigation. I'm quite shocked, considering the fact that he was in committee this morning and would have heard Inspector Duval give a very clear warning to members of the Legislature of the fact that you respect the police investigation, and you do not conduct a police investigation on the floor of the Legislature.

In fact, he may himself be jeopardizing the police investigation by engaging in this type of behaviour in the Legislature. It really is beneath that honourable member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I believe these are straightforward questions, and I expect a straightforward answer from the Acting Premier.

OPP documents allege that Peter Faist came into the Premier's office and wiped out computers, and was under contract to the Liberal Party and caucus. Will the government provide Peter Faist's invoices for his work that day and for any other work wiping out government computers?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, we have spoken in the House about Peter Faist's involvement both with the Liberal caucus service bureau and the Ontario Liberal Party—the first, under the former Premier, and the second, up until last Sunday. We have offered this information to the proper authorities.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to make clear that we will let the police reach whatever conclusions they want. We have no indication that the invoices or any of the work done are in any way related to the allegations about the former chief of staff in the former Premier's office.

Again, I warn the honourable member, as Inspector Duval said this morning, "If you require me to answer questions on specific evidence, I could potentially threaten the prosecution on any criminal offences that may resolve from this investigation."

I think all members should take the advice of Inspector Duval to heart.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last year, the government announced a number of changes to social assistance across the province. These changes were a first step in a plan to reform Ontario's social assistance programs, with the objective of removing barriers and increasing opportunities for everyone to participate in the workforce.

1100

Since the start of the process to reform social services in the province, many of my constituents in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell would like to know what changes they can expect. Some constituents have mentioned that there might be a merger of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. Speaker, though you, can the minister clarify if this merger is in our government's plans, and could he let us know of the good work being done to reform social assistance in Ontario?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm delighted to respond to the honourable member's question. I want to speak a bit about our future plans for social assistance reform. In particular, I get a lot of questions about the merger of OW and ODSP. Our government is committed to making social assistance work better for our clients. Our plan is guided by the advice we received from the Lankin-Sheikh report and by the conversations we're having with clients, advocates and other partners. Let me be very clear about something: Our government has considered the recommendation that both programs be merged, but we believe keeping them intact is the best way forward. For this reason we will not—I repeat, not—be merging the two programs. We've heard loud and clear from virtually everybody that this isn't the way to go. So we're looking forward to improving the programs as they exist.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Minister.

There's always an interest in the way social assistance programs are delivered across this great province, and providing services in an effective manner is important. Ontarians expect services that are easy to access and are responsive to their needs. However, it's absolutely crucial that social assistance recipients understand that reform is necessary at times to ensure that the system works better for the long term.

Speaker, it's very quiet in here. The minister indicated that Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program will not be merged.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: The minister indicated that Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program will not be merged. Could he please tell us if there are still ways we can improve how the programs operate or if recipients should expect the status quo?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The Speaker needs help, but not necessarily that kind.

Absolutely not. It means that instead of spending time on merging programs, we're focusing on making both

programs work better at supporting people and removing barriers to employment. Our multi-year reform plan has four objectives: to motivate and support people to be successful in the workforce; to provide more adequate assistance; to deliver modern, responsive services; and ensure public confidence in the system. We are making progress on harmonizing the rules and benefits. We are making practical improvements to benefit clients—

Interjection: We've come a long way.

Hon. Ted McMeekin:—like testing peer mentors to help clients achieve their employment goals. Indeed, Minister, we have come a long way.

Social assistance affects almost 900,000 people every day. Reform is taking time. We are doing it right by consulting with the people.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last November, the members of this House unanimously passed my private member's resolution to set up an all-party committee to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario. We are now into the spring session and over four months of no action from your government. Minister, will you agree to honour the wish of this House so this committee can be set up?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Interjection.

Hon. John Milloy: Okay, I'll take it. Oh, I guess I can't.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You cannot. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen Murray: The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: It's interesting. The fact of the matter is that the honourable member is talking about a process question. The fact is that our government has been very proud of its record of activity when it comes to northern Ontario, when it comes to rural areas, when it comes to the subject areas that he puts forward, Mr. Speaker. I don't think we necessarily need another committee in order to take the type of action which I know that the Minister of Transportation has taken and is going to take over the coming months as we deal with these transportation issues throughout these areas throughout the province. We don't need another committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Sadly, Mr. Speaker, that's the typical answer that we get when we talk about rural Ontario.

Again, back to the Minister of Transportation. Hopefully, he'll pay more attention and give me a good answer this time. Minister, you know that presently in rural and northern Ontario, public transportation is essentially non-existent. You have heard through me and through rural and northern residents, as well as anti-poverty groups including the United Way, how critical it is that we action this transportation study.

Following the cutbacks by Via Rail and Greyhound bus services and your government's divestiture of On-

tario Northland, as many as two million people in some 390 communities north of the GTA today can't readily access transportation to get to work, to doctors' appointments or to visit family and friends.

Again, Minister, will you do the right thing? Will you set up this all-party committee immediately?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Acting Premier.

Hon. John Milloy: The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just want to try and get my head around what the member is trying to suggest here, because when his party was in power, the last few years they were in power, they spent \$1.4 billion on infrastructure, which was an all-time low. Today, we're spending \$14 billion a year on infrastructure. We are spending \$10 in rural Ontario for infrastructure for every \$1 the Conservatives spent. So this party that's supposed to be pro-rural spent 10 cents for every dollar we spend on rural infrastructure.

The reason the honourable member has so many problems is because his party in power did what his federal party continues to do: cancel Via, cut back service, cancel projects, and that's why we have a problem. We don't need a committee; we need to keep spending the way we are and investing in rural Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Liberal government has denied knowing anything about the police investigation. But today, in the justice committee, our witness, Detective Constable Duval from the anti-rackets branch of the OPP, indicated that the OPP was interviewing current political staff in this building and during business hours.

How is it possible that the government had no inkling of what was happening while police were roaming the halls and conducting interviews of these people?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I suggest that after question period, the honourable member may want to go to the Globe and Mail website and read the headline of their coverage of what Inspector Duval said today and the conclusion they reached: that in fact none of this activity occurred under the current Premier.

He may also want to take a lesson from Inspector Duval when he warned legislators that their job is not to interfere in police investigations. It may even hamper it.

What's interesting is that the member from Vaughan asked a number of questions of the inspector. The first set of questions involved the scurrilous allegations that have been made by the Leader of the Opposition, if they were true or supported by the ITO. Inspector Duval gave a very simple answer: "No."

Then the member from Vaughan said, "I notice in reviewing the ITO and looking at the list of names that in fact"—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I trust the discretion of Detective Constable Duval in answering the questions that he

thought were appropriate, and I ask the Acting Premier to answer this next question.

There were OPP investigators at Queen's Park over the course of weeks. There were around half a dozen visits and at least 14 interviews conducted in this building, but somehow the government claims that they knew nothing about this investigation until last week.

Does the Acting Premier understand why Ontarians would have a difficult time understanding this or accepting this?

Hon. John Milloy: I think it has been a matter of public record that the OPP have been investigating for some time.

What happened last Thursday is that some documents were made public by the court. In them were some accusations, very serious accusations, against a former chief of staff to the former Premier, and at that time, the Premier indicated that that's the first she had learned of them; I think for most Ontarians it was the first that they had learned of them.

But, again, let me go back to the exchange with Inspector Duval and the member from Vaughan: "So to be clear, if an individual's name is listed in this ITO, does that necessarily mean they have committed a crime or they have actually engaged in any wrongdoing?" "No."

Then the member from Vaughan said, "I noticed in reviewing the ITO and looking at the list of names that, in fact, even members of the PC caucus and the NDP caucus are listed in the ITO. Just out of curiosity, why are the names in the ITO?" The inspector answered, "Some of them were witnesses for this police investigation."

The fact is, the police have undertaken their work, and as Inspector Duval cautioned, we should allow them to—

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

Interjections.

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

1110

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi, the Honourable Eric Hoskins. Unlike my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I actually don't mind the quiet.

My question concerns our government's commitment to become North America's leading jurisdiction for social enterprises, to encourage businesses to have a positive social, cultural and environmental impact while, of course, generating revenue. That is our positive plan to create jobs and grow our economy.

In September, Ontario launched its social enterprise strategy, a comprehensive plan to grow the sector, which already represents 10,000 social enterprises across the province, 68% of which have a focus on poverty reduction. We are creating the conditions for businesses to thrive in a socially conscious way, especially important in my own riding of Etobicoke North.

My question is this: Can the minister please inform the House about our accomplishments in social enterprise?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Social enterprises, as the member just said, are businesses and not-for-profits that have positive social, environmental and cultural impacts. Ontario is already a leading jurisdiction in social enterprise, but our goal is to make Ontario the number one jurisdiction in North America for social enterprise.

We have created the Office for Social Enterprise in my ministry to support this initiative. As part of our strategy, the government has launched a \$4-million social enterprise demonstration fund that builds the capacity of our early-stage high-growth social enterprises.

We also are working to connect social enterprises with global investors. It will be a \$1-trillion market globally within the decade. We want our social enterprises to be able to tap into that market, so we partnered with Social Capital Markets, with MaRS and with the Royal Bank of Canada to host an international social finance conference just last month here in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Minister, speaking doctor to doctor, I appreciate your overview. I know my community of Etobicoke North will be pleased to hear that our government has been active in connecting investors and social entrepreneurs, especially since many social enterprises hire youth and other vulnerable communities. My own riding, like many members in this House, having a large youth population, I have many conversations with constituents about the strides that we are making for their jobs and social enterprise strategies.

I believe it's important that we have taken the initiative to establish an office to coordinate social enterprise activities across government. This, of course, will streamline the process.

My question is this: What are the other supports that we have developed to help the social enterprise sector develop and thrive in this globalized economy?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We have also supported the establishment and launch of the Social Venture Connection, an exchange which is the first North American social finance platform that connects impact investors with investment-ready social enterprises. We have also announced we are moving forward with social impact bonds.

But I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to acknowledge again Tim Jones, the CEO of Artscape, a great social enterprise here in Toronto that strengthens arts and culture. Tim was recently awarded a very prestigious international honour from the Schwab Foundation and has been named Social Entrepreneur of the Year. Congratulations, Tim. He's just an example of one of the many talented social entrepreneurs and social enterprises here in this province that we are working hard to support.

RONDEAU PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. With cottage leases set to expire at the end of 2017, the Rondeau Cottagers Association has

fought to keep the 120-year-old community intact. You have been co-operative, as have previous MNR ministers. The cottagers were relieved when you told them that there was no appetite to throw them out.

However, a letter to the cottagers dated March 25 from assistant deputy minister Tracey Mill stated that it is the ministry's goal to "restore and rehabilitate the park to its natural state. This will continue to be the goal of the ministry for the years ahead."

Minister, cottagers are rightly concerned that her statement means that the cottages are doomed for demolition. These are mixed messages. Minister, my question is: Is the removal of the cottages within Rondeau imminent and, if so, will you make the final—

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

Hon. David Oraziotti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. The member opposite knows full well that we have been working together on this. Senior staff from my office met with him on February 12 of this year to discuss this issue.

I don't believe the messages are incompatible in the sense that we're doing everything that we can to ensure that the ecological integrity of the park is maintained. As the member opposite knows, there's a high number of endangered species in this park area. This is the last area of Carolinian forest in the province, contained within this park, and there are 285 cottage leases in this park, as well, that have been extended over 21-year periods of time for a number of years.

We need to get this right. As the member knows, we are committed to working with him and the cottagers to find a solution moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The 420-foot dock at Rondeau Provincial Park was extensively damaged by ice over this harsh winter. A local petition to save it has gathered over 1,000 signatures online, and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters have added their support for the repair of the pier. The Rondeau Cottagers Association is even open to negotiations to help pay for the repairs.

This pier was used for swimming, fishing, walking, and even enjoyed by many residents in my community and tourists—for decades. The "big dock," as it's called, is unique to Rondeau and a main attraction.

Respectfully, Minister, in the words of the anglers in my riding: "Are we going to fish or continue to cut bait?" Can you say today that the historical structure will not be removed from the park, and repaired this year?

Hon. David Oraziotti: Again, thanks to the member for the question. One of the challenges with respect to this park, as the member knows full well, is that cottagers in the park have benefited from payment in lieu by the ministry, which has totalled almost \$900,000 a year in taxes being paid to the community of Chatham-Kent in lieu of taxes that probably should have been paid by cottagers.

The ministry is under incredible pressure with respect to these types of infrastructure investments. We have

these types of needs all across the province, and we want to prioritize and use our resources as best as possible to remediate and improve these types of infrastructure projects.

Again, we're committed to working with the member, and I look forward to a solution moving forward. As the member also knows, there were environmental and economic studies that were supposed to be done. They are nearing completion. We should be able to release those in the next several weeks, and we'll have more to say about that. I look forward to working with the member.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Acting Premier. Does the Acting Premier think that the people of Ontario should be paying for partisan ads that promote the governing party instead of the public interest?

Hon. John Milloy: Absolutely not, which is why when we came to power we were so offended. One of the first things that we did was to undo the practice of the former Progressive Conservative Party, which used taxpayers' money. I remember, as an Ontarian, being disgusted by the countless flyers of a partisan nature that I was receiving in my mailbox, which were put forward by the government and paid for with taxpayers' money but were in fact promoting the Progressive Conservative Party.

That's why, when we came to power, we passed legislation—in 2004, I believe it was—to make sure that in those three key areas of radio and TV, newspapers and billboards—that those ads would be looked at by the Auditor General to make sure that they serve the appropriate purpose that they were put out for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the Acting Premier: That legislation has got loopholes so big, you can drive a train through the darned things.

I ask you again: We know that in the last three months you spent \$30 million in partisan ads put forward by the government and by the broader public sector, and you continue doing it. I'm going to ask you the question once again: Are you prepared to close those loopholes, in order to stop those agencies from spending money that could, quite frankly, be used for better things?

1120

Hon. John Milloy: I think we have to be careful here. We brought in a new regime when it comes to advertising, quite frankly disgusted with what had gone on under the previous government. We expect all taxpayer-funded advertising to apply to that regime or to adhere to that regime. At the same time, we asked the Auditor General to focus on those three key areas: radio and TV, newspapers and billboards, and to ensure and provide that double-check, that double peace of mind, that in fact these ads are appropriate.

There is nothing wrong with government advertising. They talk about valuable government services. But the fact of the matter is, we have brought in a regime that I

am very proud of, particularly in the face of what we saw in the province of Ontario for eight very long years.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. According to the 2011 census, almost a quarter of First Nations people in Canada live in Ontario, more than in any other province. Some 80% of the aboriginal population in Ontario lives off-reserve, with 62% residing in urban centres.

My riding of Scarborough–Guildwood has one of the highest off-reserve aboriginal populations in the province. The population is young and growing, with 36% comprised of youth aged 19 and under, compared with 25% for non-aboriginal, and a historic growth rate of 32%.

I know aboriginal people living in urban areas face unique challenges like higher unemployment rates, lower health status and a lower rate of high school graduation than non-aboriginal. Approximately 37,000 aboriginal people are living in Toronto alone, with large populations in Ottawa, Sudbury and Thunder Bay.

Can the minister tell us how government is working to improve and deliver services to aboriginal people living in urban centres?

Hon. David Zimmer: Just this past Monday, I was pleased to announce, along with the Minister of Infrastructure and the Ministers of Health and Culture, that the province is transferring a section of land on the site of the Pan/Parapan Am Games athletes' village to Anishnawbe Health Toronto. A world-class health care and dynamic aboriginal community and cultural centre will be built here following the games.

I'm very excited to share that my ministry and I will be taking on the responsibility of acting as the lead facilitator in this important initiative. We will work directly with Anishnawbe Health to bring together appropriate aboriginal partners so the hub meets the diverse needs of the aboriginal people. This hub will serve as a place for learning and innovation and for sharing traditional and modern culture and knowledge. It can provide a variety of services. We are working for a space where the aboriginal community can gather in this great city. The aboriginal—

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister. It's great to hear such good news. This really points to the whole government approach Ontario is taking to support the aboriginal community. Projects like this are the building blocks to a relationship built on trust and mutual respect with urban aboriginal peoples in Ontario.

We know that a constructive, co-operative relationship with aboriginal peoples in Ontario leads to improved opportunities and a better future not only for aboriginal people but for all people living in Ontario.

Given the landmark nature of this announcement, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister

expand upon the land to be transferred? When will the community health centre and aboriginal hub be built?

Hon. David Zimmer: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend from Scarborough–Guildwood, who I know shares a great passion for the culture of indigenous people.

We're very excited about this. This is 2.4 acres of land. It has been legally transferred. It's in the ownership now of the Anishnawbe health foundation, which is working through the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and with other urban aboriginal groups and partners to see the development of this site as a legacy project after the Pan Am Games. So construction will start.

What's going on now is that Douglas Cardinal is the architect they've selected for the project, and the planning will be going ahead for comprehensive cultural, performing, visual arts and employment entrepreneurship, as well as wellness and the practice of traditional medicine. We think this will be transformative to the future of aboriginal people.

I want to thank the Minister of Health and the minister of heritage and culture, and my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, for their leadership on this.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, it's your job to ensure that law and order is maintained in Ontario, but you are failing to do that when it comes to cracking down on contraband tobacco. Promises like increased fines are meaningless if you don't give the OPP and municipal police forces the authority and resources to stop illegal cigarettes from reaching the streets. As you stand idly by, hundreds of millions in tax revenue go up in smoke, and the livelihood of about 75,000 Ontarians in the convenience store sector is threatened.

Can you tell me exactly what enforcement tools and resources you have given police to butt out illegal contraband tobacco?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite, as the critic to my ministry, for asking a very important question. I also very much look forward to working with both the critics, the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from London West, on important issues around community safety.

These are very important issues. Obviously, I am getting briefed on them one by one to have a better understanding as to how we ensure that, on issues like contraband tobacco, we are as effective working in partnership with other police services, working in partnership with the RCMP so that we curtail the import of contraband and the use of contraband tobacco in our province.

I look forward to the ideas from the member opposite in that regard because I think, frankly speaking, it is a shared responsibility for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: Almost every speaker on Monday, when we debated your Bill 131, mentioned that the government is lacking on the illegal tobacco trade.

When you look at the issues in the province, you have essentially done nothing. The latest Ontario Convenience Stores Association's study shows that I'm right. Your failure to give police the tools they need means illegal cigarettes now comprise nearly half of the market in some locations.

More than 70 municipalities have passed resolutions asking you to get illegal smokes off their streets. Jurisdictions like Quebec prove that if police have the power to enforce, revenue goes up, and the supply of contraband tobacco goes down.

But it starts with you doing your job and putting hard-working Ontarians ahead of criminals. When are you going to do your job? When are you going to crack down on illegal cigarettes?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I have full confidence, and the government has full confidence, in the job that the OPP and other, local police services do when it comes to cracking down on illegal tobacco. There is a very robust relationship between the OPP, the RCMP and other police services from other provinces and municipal services in making sure that we are taking concrete steps in illegal activities around contraband tobacco.

If you look at the results, since 2008, for example, more than 223 million illegal cigarettes, 2.5 million untaxed cigars and 74 million grams of untaxed fine-cut or other tobacco products have been seized by Ministry of Finance investigators and inspectors. There is a lot of work that is already being done among police services on a complicated scheme, in fact, that is employed.

We have full confidence in our police, in the RCMP and other municipal services, that they will continue to do the work and make sure illegal tobacco is controlled in our province.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last summer, the previous Minister of Municipal Affairs promised to reform the Ontario Municipal Board. But the government's review says that this "consultation will not discuss or consider ... eliminating or changing the OMB's operations, practices and procedures." The government is bowing to developers who do not want any changes to the OMB.

It is another bait and switch. People are tired of hearing this government promise one thing to communities and then deliver something else on behalf of developers.

Will the new minister do what his government has promised and review the OMB itself?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister without portfolio, please come to order.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. I do understand very clearly that this particular member has expressed a specific interest in this issue for quite a period of time.

1130

What I can tell him is that there has been significant consultation that has been undertaken on this specific issue. If I remember correctly, the consultation began in the fall of last year and concluded in the early winter of this year, somewhere around January 2014. That consultation has been completed. The detail is within the ministry.

Within a shorter period of time, I would hope, I've asked ministry staff for information back on this piece. They have the consultation. They are reviewing the materials, and at some point, I would hope in the not-too-distant future, they will get back to me with what they believe the next steps will be when it comes to this particular issue.

We in the ministry are somewhat still uncertain as to what the member's PMB would accomplish, and so we are taking this all into consideration. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future we will have something more to bring forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Consultations and the changes that you're planning mean nothing without changes to the OMB itself. The OMB will still decide whether an appeal goes forward or not.

Last year in Waterloo region, the OMB ignored the province's Places to Grow Act and approved a sprawling development 10 times bigger than what the rules allowed. The OMB does not respect official plans or even provincial statutes.

When will the government keep its promise and rein in the unelected, unaccountable and out-of-control OMB?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I go back to the original point I was trying to make. The member opposite is putting forward a position; in fact, I think it was in the media not so long ago—was Kitchener-Waterloo region where he was? He was speaking to them about his desire to see the OMB completely dissolved. When he was in Kitchener-Waterloo, he suggested to them that we should do away with the OMB, but at the same time, we need to create some other mechanism to deal with these issues.

We already have a mechanism. You disagree on what that mechanism is and whether it should continue to exist, but at the same time, you seem to be suggesting we need something.

What we are doing, as part of that land use planning consultation that was done across the province, is considering potential changes to the OMB as it is currently constructed. We will have information coming back on that in the not-too-distant future. There is a provincial interest here to be maintained. We believe in that position,

and hopefully very soon—I don't want to put a timeline on this—we will be in a position to discuss this at greater length.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Six individuals from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt will be receiving an Ontario Volunteer Service Award for 25 years of service to a non-profit organization. One of these volunteers, Warren Kanagaratnam, is receiving this award for his outstanding work with the International Movement for Tamil Culture.

Volunteers, who donate their time, energy, skills and knowledge to causes close to their heart, are true leaders and heroes in our community. Ontario has a long and proud tradition of volunteerism. It is estimated that Ontarians volunteer over 860 million volunteer hours annually.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please inform the House how our province recognizes these valuable individuals through the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for the question, and I look forward to joining her on April 16 at her Volunteer Service Awards in Scarborough.

This year, over 11,000 volunteers will be presented with the Ontario Volunteer Service Award; 55 ceremonies will be held across this great province from now until the end of June. I would like to remind and personally invite all members of this House to please join their local communities as we celebrate the recipients in handing out the awards across this great province.

Mr. Speaker, our province is the number one destination for newcomers. When newcomers choose our province, it is because they know how highly we place a value on fairness, equality and social justice. They know that Ontario fundamentally believes in offering a hand to someone in need. They know that we take care of our neighbours and our communities, and we take care of our vulnerable population.

Each year, six million volunteers across the province help make their communities a better place to live. The Volunteer Service Award is a unique platform to acknowledge the hard work of local volunteers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I would like to join the minister in congratulating all the 2014 award recipients.

Speaker, I know that our government supports a number of initiatives to help to encourage and promote volunteerism in Ontario. We also know that promoting and acknowledging volunteerism is a part of our government's plan to invest in the people and organizations that enrich our communities.

I want to share one example. For almost nine years, I have seen, on a weekly basis, young people in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt volunteer in a reading pro-

gram for young children. I want to pay tribute to these young people as well as volunteers in local nursing homes and seniors' facilities.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please update the House on other Ontario honours and recognition programs?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I'd like to thank the member for her question. That is correct: Our province has several programs to acknowledge the dedication of our six million volunteers here in Ontario.

In fact, I'm happy that the member has brought up a youth initiative in her local community. I'd like to remind the members that this spring, we'll be kicking off the seventh annual ChangeTheWorld youth challenge. This year's campaign has been expanded to six weeks. The official goal is 33,000 young people aged 14 to 18, and they will volunteer for at least three hours.

Additionally, this spring, one of my favourite Ontario awards will be presented: the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism. The late June Callwood committed her life to action and social justice, particularly related to vulnerable communities. In her lifetime, she founded or co-founded more than 50 different organizations.

All of the awards ceremonies mentioned today not only honour individuals, but they remind us of the value of being an active and engaged citizen here in the beautiful province of Ontario.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I look for some guidance from you on a very important point of order. It has come to my attention, Mr. Speaker, that it is your birthday this weekend, and I'm wondering if I could seek unanimous consent, on behalf of the Legislature, to wish you a happy birthday.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. That's not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought I was going to get past this one. The member from Durham would appreciate this very much. I don't want anybody to know. It doesn't matter. I appreciate it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Being that we won't be sitting tomorrow, I would like to wish my colleague Jim Wilson a happy birthday tomorrow, and also my brothers Mark and Martin, tomorrow as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They say there's something special about April.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to have in the gallery today members of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress of Toronto: the president, Oksana Rewa—and I apologize in advance if I mangle any names—Olga Yatsetchko, Olena Wawryshyn, Michael Wawryshyn, Yuri Daschko, Yuri Weretelnyk, Emilia Stelmach, Taras Masnyi, Lesya Bablak, Denys Golemenkov, Tamara Koszarny, Marta Sporniak, Marc Marzotto, Pavlo Sugolov—all welcome to the House.

ANDREW “ANDY” HOUSTON

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have some sad news for the House, and that is to inform members of the passing of Andrew “Andy” Joseph Houston, who was a 15-year veteran of the Ontario Provincial Police. He passed away on March 30, and his funeral was today in the town of Mount Forest. Andy was an extraordinary man. He leaves his wife, Sara, and his sons Jack, Sam, and Max. I know that I speak for all members of this House in extending condolences to his family.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today to speak to the failed, yet shameful, public smear campaign this government recently conducted against the member from Nipissing. The Standing Committee on Estimates this week ruled that, contrary to incorrect accusations from the government House leader, the member from Nipissing disclosed only documents that were in the “public domain,” as was stated by the committee Clerk. The Chair of the committee, the member from Beaches–East York, stated that there was “no breach” of privilege. Those documents, as you will recall, detailed the \$4.5-billion fiscal gap that was deliberately kept from the public in last year's budget.

Despite the member presenting clear evidence in this House that the documents he referenced were public, the Liberals staged a disgusting display this week at committee. The personal muckraking and stall tactics exhibited as this committee tried to get a simple ruling—that's all we were trying to get, a simple ruling—was a deliberate personal attack on the member from Nipissing. This carried on even though the Liberals knew that they were wrong.

I'm pleased that the member from Nipissing has been vindicated, and our caucus will not be intimidated into backing away from our pursuit of the truth for Ontario taxpayers.

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Today, I'm tabling a motion. It says that, in the opinion of this House, the Liquor Control

Board of Ontario should suspend the sale of Russian-made Russian Standard Vodka due to the international crisis in Ukraine. I want to make a couple of things clear. First of all, it's just one brand that is 100% made in Russia; that's Russian Standard Vodka.

Of course we know, and our friends here in the Ukrainian Canadian Congress who are all here to witness the tabling of this motion, that this is symbolic. This is symbolic, but symbols are so important, particularly where peace is concerned and particularly where the lives of Ukrainian Ontarians are concerned. There are some 350,000 Ukrainians who live in our province. They have relatives in Ukraine. Many knew people in the Maidan. Last Sunday, I was out with them in front of city hall, where 100 martyrs were honoured, 100 who had been killed by sniper fire while protesting in the Maidan.

This is a critical situation. People are concerned for their families and their loved ones. It's extremely important that we say something in this Legislature, that we do something in this Legislature, on behalf of our constituents. As a co-author, along with yourself, Mr. Speaker, of the Holodomor bill that declared that a genocide, and also as co-author of Ukrainian heritage month, I could not not speak. On behalf of our 350,000 Ukrainians, on behalf of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and on behalf of people who desire peace everywhere, I table this motion.

SARAH BURKE MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Last Wednesday, I was pleased to learn that Highway 93, which runs through Simcoe county, will be renamed Sarah Burke Memorial Highway in honour of the freestyle skier who passed away in 2012. Sarah Burke was born in Barrie, raised in Midland and started skiing when she was five. She was a talented skier, winning four gold medals at the winter X Games in 2011, and was the first woman to land an amazing 1,080-degree spin: three full rotations. In 2012, she was inducted into the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame.

Burke was also a strong advocate behind the inclusion of the half pipe and slopestyle ski events in the Olympic games. These events were finally included in the winter Olympics in Sochi this year. Burke, however, was never able to participate in the events she so strongly advocated for, as she passed away tragically in Salt Lake City, Utah, during a training accident in January 2012. At the Sochi games, her teammates took her ashes and spread them over the Olympic half pipe to honour Burke and her efforts. On that very same mountain, Canada won nine of its 25 medals.

Sarah Burke serves as a fantastic role model for young women everywhere. Her legacy will forever be remembered as not just as a freestyle skier but as an advocate for her sport. It's a great thing to hear that Highway 93 has been renamed in her honour.

MARY ANN FOUND AND BRENDA METCALF

Mr. John O'Toole: I today want to stand in this House and honour two women of excellence in agricul-

ture in Durham region. I'd like to congratulate Mary Ann Found and Brenda Metcalf.

Mary Ann is from Courtice and won the Women in Excellence in Agriculture Award. The award is presented by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, which recognized contributions that Mary Ann has made to the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and to her local community through promotion of agriculture. She is only one of the founding members of the Durham Farm Connections. The informative Farm Connections website; Aggie, the interactive farm robot; and the touring display entitled "Why farming matters" are some of the ways that Mary Ann has brought farming and urban communities together. Mary Ann has been instrumental in helping the Durham Farm Connections program grow from an annual three-day event to adding a high school education day, and in forming an ag strategy committee to work with the agricultural community to develop plans to place agricultural education front and centre in Durham region and beyond, in Ontario.

I also wish to congratulate one of her colleagues, Brenda Metcalf, who is currently 4-H club leader with Mary Ann, a volunteer office manager, and is very active in local, regional and 4-H opportunities. A valued member of her community, she is a member of the Women's Institute and an executive member of the Baseline Community Association, the Clarington agricultural advisory council and the Farm Connections ag education committee.

These two women are leaders in my community that are feeding the cities of Ontario, and I thank them personally.

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL GRANTS SUBVENTIONS DU CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to congratulate my incredibly talented constituents who recently received grants from the Ontario Arts Council.

Last year, M^{me} Suzanne Charron de Val Caron a reçu une bourse de 12 000 \$ de création littéraire pour son livre *Joe LaFlamme : L'indomptable dompteur de loups*, qui a vécu à Gogama. Her book is available in both French and English.

Julian Cote of Naughton received a northern arts grant for his music work.

Erik Harju from Worthington is a media artist. Erik's video "The Forest Gnome" is on YouTube. I encourage you to check it out. It is really funny.

Kenneth Lillie-Paetz of Wahnapiatae is an author, artist, educator and the artist behind *monkeypharmacy.com*. Go on the Internet and check out what he has done.

We also have Beth Mairs of Worthington, a filmmaker and writer for BAM North Productions, an amazing production company.

Émilie O'Bonsawin de Hanmer, une musicienne, a joué à Cousin Vinny's, qui est juste à côté de mon bureau

de comté. She also drives a really cool tie-dyed Volkswagen Beetle. You have to check this out.

I am so proud of those artists. Nickel Belt is a diverse place, so I want to encourage more artists to participate in those programs and bring more arts and culture to our diverse Nickel Belt. It is always a pleasure to recognize them.

Merci.

1310

KEMPTVILLE COLLEGE

Mr. John Yakabuski: People all across eastern Ontario and in my riding were shocked by this government's announcement to close Kemptville College. For nearly a century, people in my riding have gone to Kemptville College to gain their agricultural education. The government's short-sighted announcement not only caught people off guard, but has forced many hopeful students to abruptly change their plans for this fall.

I can speak of thousands, but I will speak of two people in my riding: Olivia Howard and Suzanne Green from the Eganville area, who are going to be faced with significant difficulties as a result of your decision to close this college. It will leave them the choice of enrolling in Ridgetown, which is seven to eight hours away from home and nearly double the cost of tuition; another choice would be to go to Macdonald College in Quebec. Again, this is not an option they wish to pursue.

Kemptville College is known for its excellence in programming. It's got a great small-town atmosphere, is conveniently located for people in eastern Ontario, and almost every student there also has a family member who attended Kemptville College.

Municipalities in my riding have passed resolutions demanding that this decision be reversed. It is absolutely wrong to allow this college to close. At the very least, the government should support my colleague from Leeds-Grenville, MPP Steve Clark, and his call for a two-year moratorium, so that all local options can be considered before it's too late. The Premier has the power to do exactly that, and she knows it. It is up to her to act to keep this vital educational facility open.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I am very pleased to make an announcement on affordable housing on behalf of the residents of 2267 and 2677 Kipling Avenue in my own riding of Etobicoke North. Last month, I was joined by some federal colleagues, as well as the councillor of Ward 1, Vincent Crisanti, and the mayor of the city of Toronto, the honourable Rob Ford, to make a \$1.83-million announcement, co-funded by the federal and provincial governments, to the building's property management company—I must say, a very conscientious group of individuals—Humber Property Management.

We helped fund renovations to the roof, boiler room, flooring and finishing, kitchen, bathrooms, and six

elevators in the two buildings. I must say, though, from the feedback that we received from the residents, and from being able to confer with some of the management there, as well as some of the corporate representatives, I was very pleased to deal with this excellent corporate citizen, Humber Property Management.

It is investments such as these in affordable housing that provide families with access to stable, safe and affordable homes, and I am proud to thank and be a part of a government that gets affordable housing and that entire dossier.

Working together, we're hoping to build a more successful, compassionate, and just and united province, and announcements such as the one we made on Kipling Avenue are a part of that.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yesterday, the Minister of Finance tabled the government's long-term report on the economy. Instead of being aspirational—the Premier's latest buzzword—the document is instead a very pessimistic outlook on the next 20 years in the province of Ontario. The report projects that the Ontario economy will grow by an annual average of 2.1%, while at the same time projecting average annual inflation over the same period of exactly 2%. This means that the government believes the provincial economy in Ontario will be essentially stagnant for the next 20 years—aspirational, indeed.

At the same time, the Minister of Finance would have us believe that the government will balance the provincial budget by 2017-18. He's made this claim many times, but his claim has been thoroughly debunked by the Ministry of Finance's own documents, which the member for Nipissing disclosed last month.

I submit that this government will never balance the provincial budget; however, I believe a successor government must, and will. When the budget is balanced, I continue to believe that the provincial government should commit itself to a long-term debt repayment plan. We need to begin to pay down the provincial debt in good years, instead of continuing to dig the hole deeper.

Two years ago I suggested that the government should create a new line item in the budget committing it to making a payment on the principal of the provincial debt of at least 2.5% of program spending of that fiscal year. As the Minister of Finance prepares his budget for this year, I again highlight this important issue.

Over the next 20 years, let us build an Ontario economy that doesn't stagnate, but instead allows us to pay down the debt and achieve our full economic potential.

BRIDGE BUILDING CONTEST

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: This past weekend, I was invited to join the Professional Engineers Ontario, Scarborough chapter, at their annual bridge building contest. MPP Soo Wong was also there in attendance.

Professional Engineers Ontario have hosted the bridge building contest for the past 11 years, inviting hundreds

of students from Scarborough-area schools to build a bridge from Popsicle sticks, a bridge that is then tested for any flaws, and those flaws are addressed. I had the opportunity to operate the testing station. Students are expected to take the advice given on the bridges from engineers and come back next year with a stronger bridge.

Students from two schools in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood, Churchill Heights junior public school and George B. Little junior public school, entered the competition and performed extremely well.

I was most pleased to see how many young girls were participating in the bridge building contest. There are still so many fields of study that do not appeal to women and, unfortunately, engineering is often one of them.

I am grateful that Professional Engineers hosts this event annually, as it encourages young girls and young people in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood and all of Scarborough to consider engineering as a potential career path.

Speaker, we can look forward to them building the bridges of our future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 56, An Act to prohibit certain restrictions on the use of aggregates in performing public sector construction work / *Projet de loi 56, Loi interdisant certaines restrictions frappant l'utilisation d'agrégats lors de la réalisation de travaux de construction pour le secteur public.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHRISTMAS TREE DAY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE JOUR DE L'ARBRE DE NOËL

Mr. Wilson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 185, An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day /
Projet de loi 185, Loi proclamant le Jour de l'arbre de
Noël.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: If passed, this bill will designate the
first Saturday in December of each year as Christmas
Tree Day in Ontario. This industry brings tremendous
economic and environmental benefit to our province, and
for this reason, following its introduction, I'll be seeking
unanimous consent for its prompt passage.

I want to thank Mr. Fred Somerville, president of the
Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario, for the inspiration
behind this bill. Mr. Somerville and Ms. Shirley Brennan,
executive director of Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario,
are joining us here today in the members' gallery.

Mr. Speaker, as I previously made every member of
this assembly aware, this legislation is not only in line
with other jurisdictions, including the United States,
which has deemed the entire first week of December as
National Christmas Tree Week, but it also recognizes an
industry that brings tremendous gain to our province by
producing more than one million fresh, farm-grown
Christmas trees each year and replacing those trees with
new seedlings, one million seedlings each year.

In the spirit of Christmas Tree Day in Ontario, I seek
unanimous consent that the orders for the second and
third reading of Bill 185, An Act to proclaim Christmas
Tree Day, be immediately called consecutively, and the
questions on the motions for second and third reading of
the bill be put immediately without debate or amend-
ment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson is
seeking unanimous consent that the orders for the second
and third reading of Bill 185, An Act to proclaim Christ-
mas Tree Day, be immediately called consecutively, and
the questions on the motions for second and third reading
of the bill be put immediately without debate or amend-
ment.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ONTARIO'S
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER
ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA RESPONSABILISATION
DU COMMISSAIRE
À L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 186, An Act to amend the Environmental Bill of
Rights, 1993 to establish conflict of interest guidelines
for the Environmental Commissioner / Projet de loi 186,
Loi visant à modifier la Charte des droits
environnementaux de 1993 afin d'établir des lignes

directrices sur les conflits d'intérêts pour le commissaire
à l'environnement.

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

First reading agreed to.

1320

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Today I introduced the
Accountability for Ontario's Environmental Commis-
sioner Act. This bill, if passed, would amend the En-
vironmental Bill of Rights to prohibit the Environmental
Commissioner from becoming employed or engaging in a
business or undertaking outside his or her appointment in
certain circumstances.

This bill would also prohibit the Environmental Com-
missioner from being in a conflict of interest, as
prescribed by the regulations.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

STUDENT SAFETY, HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING

Hon. Liz Sandals: The health, safety and well-being
of all Ontario students is a priority for our government.
Over the years, we've developed a number of initiatives
to help schools and boards strengthen student success and
well-being. These initiatives have focused on things such
as healthy eating, increased physical activity, better
mental health and injury prevention. That is why I'm so
pleased to support the Ontario Physical and Health
Education Association, better known as OPHEA, as they
undertake a new initiative to review how medical
conditions are managed in schools.

Our government will support OPHEA with funding of
up to \$40,000 to conduct research that will serve as an
important step in determining the best means of manag-
ing student medical conditions in our schools, including
asthma, diabetes, anaphylaxis and epilepsy, just to name
a few.

As a mother and grandmother, I know the concerns of
parents. Parents want, and deserve, to know that their
children can go to school each day and be safe. This is
especially true in cases of an emergency related to a
medical condition. In some cases, the emergency can be a
matter of life and death.

Members of this Legislature have been, and continue
to be, strong advocates on behalf of a variety of student
medical conditions. I would also like to acknowledge that
joining us in the gallery today are members of many of
the associations who are strong advocates for a variety of
conditions. We have, joining us from OPHEA, Tammy
Shubat and Chris Markham; from Epilepsy Ontario,
Rozalyn Werner-Arcé and Suzanne Moffatt; from the
Canadian Diabetes Association, Christine Albee and
Gabriella Simo; and from the Ontario Lung Association,

John Chenery. I'd like to thank all of these advocates for their work on past bills and past issues that we've discussed here in the House.

Since 2005, in fact, there have been a series of bills tabled in the House to address the management of student medical conditions in school settings around the province. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the member from Brant for his advocacy for students with anaphylaxis, and the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for his advocacy on behalf of students who live with asthma. Of course, we all know that the member from Brant is more often referred to now as Mr. Speaker.

Our government is concerned with the high incidence of medical conditions that exist in Ontario schools. We believe that stand-alone legislation for each medical condition is not only impractical but unworkable in schools. We believe that a more comprehensive approach to the management of multiple conditions would be much better for our students and our schools. Our goal is to protect the health, safety and well-being of our students, and all schools should have a plan in place to deal with medical emergencies.

OPHEA's task will be to review current policies and procedures and to identify both best practices and any gaps. We will use OPHEA's research to plan the next steps in improving the safety of students with medical conditions. Their data will be critical to guide our government in making evidence-based and informed decisions. OPHEA has the tools and the knowledge to do this important task well.

I want to thank and acknowledge OPHEA for being the voice for healthy, active living in schools and communities by promoting quality programs and services, partnerships and advocacy.

OPHEA is also one of many partners in the education sector that support a more comprehensive approach to the management of medical conditions in schools. Other partners include the Catholic Principals' Council, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, the Ontario Principals' Council, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario, l'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes, and l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, among others.

This work represents the next steps toward creating a more comprehensive approach that provides the right supports in schools for children with special requirements because of medical conditions.

We are all responsible for creating safe and healthy schools. Together, we will protect the health, safety, and well-being of all students, and we will make a difference in the lives of Ontario students and families.

Thank you, Speaker.

PRESTO FARE CARD

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, Presto has reached a major milestone. More than one million riders

are now using their Presto cards to tap on to transit across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, and in Ottawa as well.

Presto is a state-of-the-art payment system that allows riders to pay their fare and travel seamlessly and conveniently across multiple transit systems with just one card. Whether you are travelling on a GO train or municipal transit, Presto makes commuting easier for families on the go.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing reliable, modern and integrated public transit in Ontario. Presto is an important part of the commitment because it makes travelling and commuting so much more convenient for people who travel across multiple municipalities to get to work, school or appointments. One million customers is proof that we are well on our way to delivering on that commitment.

Presto rollout began in 2009 with an initial 500 customers. Fast forward to today, and the service is growing rapidly. It has doubled in size over the last year alone, from approximately 500,000 cardholders last year to more than one million today. In 2013, Presto added an average of 50,000 cardholders per month. There have been more than 188 million taps, paying three quarters of a billion dollars in fares to support the transit service.

Metrolinx will implement Presto on the TTC starting this fall. That will bring in its largest group of commuters. Presto has successfully completed rollout on OC Transpo, and the number of cards in circulation across Ottawa continues to grow.

I am proud to say that Presto is now available in all 65 GO stations, about 450 GO buses, seven municipal transit systems in the GTHA, 14 TTC subway stations, and throughout OC Transpo in Ottawa.

Our government is committed to improving public transit. Since 2003, we have invested more than \$19.3 billion in public transit in Ontario, including more than \$9.1 billion in GO Transit alone.

Our investments are paying off. In 2012, we saw an increase of more than 193 million passenger trips on municipal transit systems, compared to 2003. This has removed approximately 161 million car trips off our roads.

Presto is critical to our vision of an integrated regional transportation system for the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses. The member from Cambridge.

1330

STUDENT SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to talk about a very important initiative that the government is commencing with respect to reviewing how medical conditions are managed in our schools. I want to state at the outset that we lend our full

support to trying to come up with some idea, some mechanism, some process whereby we encourage our educational leaders to deal with these conditions.

I will note, Mr. Speaker, that you've had some experience in promoting anaphylaxis awareness. I know the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has talked about asthma and Ryan's Law, which is a piece of legislation already in the Legislature today. Epilepsy Ontario had their lobby day recently here at Queen's Park. And I will say, with respect to diabetes, that the former member from Cambridge, Gerry Martiniuk, introduced a private member's bill that was debated in 2008 on this very topic. I would say, on the basis of our shared concern with a variety of medical conditions—I know that my friend from Haldimand–Norfolk is very interested in promoting the idea in this Legislature of dealing with issues involving epilepsy. I want to state that we do need a process. I know that our educational leaders—our principals and our teachers—need some guidance. They often find that the process is mixed for every different medical condition. If we can consolidate those ideas into one piece of legislation, it helps everybody. It helps the students stay safe and it helps our educational leaders provide the care that's necessary to keep those kids safe.

I want to state at the outset that our caucus is very favourable to the idea that we're actually going to review this, but we're looking forward to the day when we actually see some legislation on this. We've heard for years that we were going to get legislation to consolidate these medical conditions; we've yet to hear that that's going to happen. Now we're going to spend \$40,000 to actually study it. We look forward to the day we can have one piece of legislation that deals with all medical conditions so we can help our kids succeed in a thriving and nurturing environment in our schools.

PRESTO FARE CARD

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We're here to talk about the Presto fare card system reaching one million users. I'm sure the minister is quite pleased with this progress, but when we actually look into the history and costs of Presto, this really isn't the feel-good milestone the minister makes it seem to be. The bottom line is this: Metrolinx will end up spending over \$700 million for the development of the Presto system. Basically, the taxpayer is paying \$700 to acquire each Presto user.

The problem with this is that the government had a choice. They could have put the taxpayer first and procured an already-developed fare card system from a company with expertise in the field or they could have developed their own system. Unfortunately, they chose the latter.

In 2006, Metrolinx awarded the contract to Accenture to develop the Presto fare card system from scratch. The development of Presto has since been characterized by cost overruns, system failings and closed tendering.

The Toronto Transit Commission, in evaluating an electronic fare system for its own riders, understood the

problems with Presto and elected to take a different approach. They had a bidding process and decided to go with a product developed by Xerox. The TTC pursued this approach to the point of outlining deal specifics with Xerox.

We know that Metrolinx has spent \$700 million to develop Presto, but does anybody want to know what the TTC would have had to pay in development costs under the Xerox deal? Zero dollars. In fact, the taxpayer would not have had to put any money into the implementation and operation of this system. That's because Xerox is one of several private companies that did what the private sector does: They identified a need, used their own money to develop the product to meet that need and retained all the financial risks because, by developing a superior product, they could collect revenue from the fares that their system processes. To me, that sounds like a win-win solution.

It's worth pointing out that both Philadelphia and Montreal use a Xerox electronic fare system. These jurisdictions chose it because it's cost-competitive and delivers its service with 99.9% accuracy. For these reasons, the TTC wanted to implement this system.

Unfortunately, according to some people close to the discussions, the government stepped in and made Toronto's gas tax funding transfer contingent on the adoption of Presto. The minister over there is free to stand and proudly talk about how one million people now use Presto. However, we have to ask ourselves if such a milestone is really a success for your ministry that has spent hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars to develop a system that is inferior to others already in the marketplace and then force transit authorities to adopt that system. I know that's not something I would want to take credit for.

STUDENT SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to congratulate the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association, OPHEA, for their advocacy and for the advocacy of their partners. I think it's a good idea to invest in the work that they want to do to provide clarity with regard to these matters of acute illnesses that have to be addressed in our schools.

But I have to note that one year ago, the Healthy Kids Panel delivered a warning. They said that Ontario was at a tipping point. They took a look at the health and well-being of our kids, and they told the government that much more needs to be done because across our province, too many students continue to face barriers to learning. Thousands of students continue to go hungry. In fact, nearly 160,000 children accessed our food banks last year, accounting for 40% of all food bank users in our province. Nearly one in three kids is overweight, and the leading cause is the lack of access to good, nutritious food and a lack of physical activity. These are not just economic and social costs. They are lost opportunities for our kids and for our province.

The province should be moving to implement the report of the Healthy Kids Panel, but the ministry also needs to do a much better job of implementing the policies and funding it already devotes to student health. Last year, the Auditor General found that the ministry just isn't doing its job when it comes to student nutrition and activity. She found that the ministry isn't collecting the information it would need in order to know whether its policies for student health and well-being are working or not.

We can't afford to let our students down, especially in these tough economic times. Families and kids are struggling more than ever. Yesterday, the finance minister told us that the economic recovery "is not as robust as was earlier expected." He warned us that the Liberals' economic plans of corporate giveaways will lead to 20 years of slow growth. Indeed, we are at a tipping point. The ministry has a responsibility to do much better in promoting student health and well-being than it has done in recent years.

PRESTO FARE CARD

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to respond to the statement made by the Minister of Transportation. There is no doubt that the arrival of electronic fare cards to Ontario transit is long overdue. Transit systems elsewhere got rid of tokens and tickets long ago, and we are only now catching up. But it was a mistake for the government to waste money trying to reinvent the wheel with new propriety technology that Ontarians paid to develop but don't even own. The minister was offended to receive the TTCriders' Sardine Award recently, but when he forces costly provincial priorities like Presto on the TTC with no operational funding support, transit service suffers.

The Auditor General said Presto is poised to become among the most expensive systems of its type in the world. This is because the original decision to procure this system as a public-private partnership trapped us in a relationship with a private contractor that made it impossible to seek better deals when Metrolinx realized the original system would soon be obsolete. We don't know how badly Ontarians got ripped off because everything is hidden behind third party confidentiality that protects private corporations and the government but not the public.

Let's remember that the government forced the costly Presto system on the TTC but offered no operational funding support. We don't know the final costs. The then Minister of Transportation, who is now the Premier, threatened to cut the TTC's funding for Transit City if it continued to shop around for a better deal. This threat came soon after her ministry cut \$4 billion from GTA transit four years ago. These cuts inspired the Save Transit City movement and marked the beginning of four years of transit chaos in Toronto that continues to this day. We still have no idea how much it will cost to implement Presto on the TTC, which represents more than 80% of all transit trips in Toronto. We have no idea

how much the TTC will need to spend each year to operate this costly system, how much scarce operating funding will be diverted away from services, how much more crowded buses will become or how many bus routes will be cut.

1340

The province used to fund 50% of the operating costs of municipal transit in Ontario, but this funding was cut by the Tories and has stayed cut with the Liberals. TTC riders are suffering from these funding cuts. The transit advocacy group TTCriders recently gave the Minister of Transportation its Sardine Award to express its frustration over uncomfortable, unreliable, infrequent or inaccessible transit service, and to demand that the province restore funding for transit operations. The minister was very offended to receive this award, but he needs to remember that when he forces—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. The time for responses is over. It is now time for petitions.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you for your indulgence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You got a few extra seconds.

The member from Durham.

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present this petition again today. It reads as follows:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy ... for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I'm pleased to present this petition to one of the new pages.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas resident levels in long-term-care facilities are rising every year, with corresponding pressures on health care demands;

"Whereas aggressive behaviour and mental health issues are on the rise and represent a significant risk to staff and residents alike;

"Whereas facilities are not currently capable of dealing with the increasing number of extremely aggressive residents;

"Whereas not enough research exists with respect to aggressive behaviour risk assessment and management;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly take into consideration the considered recommendations of groups such as the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, and allocate adequate funding and resources to long-term care for seniors."

I'll sign this and give it to Nusaybah to be delivered to the table.

GREENBELT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the town of Oakville is studying further land use in the vicinity of Third Line and Bronte Road in Oakville known as the Merton lands; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the majority landowner in the study area; and

"Whereas, despite the objections of the previous Harris-Hudak Conservative government, the Glenorchy Conservation Area was preserved as 400 hectares of natural area for generations to come; and

"Whereas, despite the initial objection of the town of Oakville and region of Halton planning department, Glenorchy Conservation Area became the first addition to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas Ontario's greenbelt is the largest permanent greenbelt in the world, protecting nearly two million acres from development; and

"Whereas residents of Oakville want the natural heritage area of the Merton lands added to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario's greenbelt;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the request from MPP Kevin Flynn and the mayor and council of the town of Oakville to include the addition of these lands in Ontario's greenbelt."

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with page Calvin.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas quality care for the 77,000 residents of long-term-care ... homes is a priority for many Ontario families;

"Whereas over the last 10 years 50% of Ontario's hospital-based complex continuing care beds have been closed by the provincial government; and there has been a 29.7% increase in the acuity level of LTC residents and 73% of LTC residents in Ontario suffer from some form of Alzheimer's or dementia;

"Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in long-term-care homes keeps pace with residents' increasing acuity and a growing number of residents with complex behaviours such as dementia and Alzheimer's;

"Whereas there is extensive evidence that a care standard can result in increased staff levels, which translates into improved quality of care for residents;

"Whereas for over a decade several Ontario coroner's inquests into nursing deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and increase in staffing levels;

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government first promised a legislated care standard for residents in the province's long-term-care homes in 2003 but in 2013 they have yet to make good on their promise;

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum standard—but falls short of actually creating one;

"Whereas the most detailed and reputable study of minimum care standards recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

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

"(1) An amendment must be made to the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day adjusted for acuity level and case mix;

"(2) The province must increase funding in order for long-term-care homes to achieve a staffing and care standard and tie public funding for homes to the provision of quality care and staffing levels that meet the legislated minimum care standard of four hours;

"(3) To ensure accountability the province must make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC home mandatory;

"(4) The province must immediately provide funding for specialized facilities for persons with cognitive impairment who have been assessed as potentially aggressive, and staff them with sufficient numbers of appropriately trained workers;

“(5) The province must stop closing complex continuing care beds and alternative-level-of-care beds to end the downloading of hospital patients with complex medical conditions to long-term-care homes.”

I agree with this and will sign it and pass it off to our page.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Mrs. Sharon Beck from Val Therese and Natalie Gaudette of Gogama, and 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 ... price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: 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 fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Mustfah to bring it to the Clerk.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I’m honoured to be joined by our NDP colleague, Mr. Paul Miller of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I think that’s a sign of good things to come in the future. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing

correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.”

I agree, I sign it and I send it to you via page Eli.

1350

SENIOR CITIZENS’ HOUSING

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition that deals with concerns relating to seniors and people with disabilities, and their personal care. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has changed its policy on how seniors living in supportive housing are served; and

“Whereas, due to this new policy of the Ontario government, seven senior homes in York region will be closing their on-site alternative community living programs on April 1, 2014, leaving 200 long-time residents living in these homes without the on-site continuous care they have been receiving from dedicated workers that have served them for years; and

“Whereas the on-site proactive and responsive care will now be replaced by a hub-and-spoke reactive care model relying on seniors themselves initiating calls for help that will have a response time of 15 minutes, at least, because the caregiver is not on-site but in a mobile unit and because this is unacceptable for seniors and residents who have for years relied on on-site staff to assist them with medical equipment, medical assistance, personal and other unanticipated needs; and

“Whereas the closure of the on-site care service will lead to inadequate care to meet the true needs of the seniors and residents and will result in undue hardship on residents and their families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: That the Ontario government reverse its decision that is leading to the closure of the alternative community living programs in seven seniors’ and retirement homes in York region and that the government stop the transfer of on-site continuous and proactive care to a reactive call with 15 minutes’ delay for care that will lower the quality of life for seniors and residents in the seven affected homes.”

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition in support of our seniors and people with disabilities.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“December 9, 2013, was a precedent-setting day in this Legislature for Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens. Premier Kathleen Wynne gave a heartfelt and official apology challenging all Ontarians ‘to be led by our sense of moral purpose before all else’ when she publicly, on behalf of the people of Ontario, took responsibility for the profound suffering of the former residents of Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres ‘who were deeply harmed and continue to bear the scars and the consequences.’

“Whereas the institutional model of care at each of these centres has been acknowledged in the public apology to have been deeply flawed whereby residents ‘suffered neglect and abuse within the very system that was meant to provide them care’; and

“Whereas it was acknowledged that former residents ‘were forcibly restrained, left in unbearable seclusion, separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, safety and their dignity’; and

“Whereas all of the class actions for former residents at Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres have reached settlement agreements with the province for a combined total of \$67.7 million; and

“Whereas a \$67.7-million settlement is wholly inadequate as compensation to the thousands of former residents and their families to redress the long-term debilitating impact of this harm; and

“Whereas all legal costs of \$15.6 million are being taken from the combined settlement total before any compensation is paid to the former residents;

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

“We ask that Premier Kathleen Wynne be led by her sense of moral purpose and use her power as Premier to pay the legitimate legal costs of Koskie Minsky LLP from Toronto who acted on behalf of the Huronia, Southwestern and Rideau Regional Centre class members, from sources over and above the combined \$67.7-million settlement.”

Speaker, I sign my signature and give this to page Caroline.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

“Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

“Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

“Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for work-

ers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014.”

I fully support the petition, Mr. Speaker, and I’ll give my petition to page Jane.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

I affix my name in full support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

VISITORS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Point of order.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m pleased to welcome Ban Abood from London West, who is here with her friends Luz Diaz and Surya Acharya. Ban is the proud mother of page Mustfah Madlol, who is an exceptional young man and is doing an exceptional job as a page for us here in the Legislative Assembly.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR
ADVERTISING ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ
DES ORGANISMES
DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC**

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act respecting broader public sector advertising / Projet de loi 134, Loi concernant la publicité des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This bill has been something that has been long sought after by, I would say, originally every party that has been in opposition for some time.

I remember the Liberals, in opposition to the Tories, went on at great length about how they were upset, and rightfully so, that the government of the day under Mike Harris, and eventually under Mr. Eves, was spending public dollars using advertising, and some of that advertising, quite frankly, was for the betterment of the government and the ruling party. The Liberals argued back then, and correctly so, I think, that that shouldn't be allowed.

Public dollars are so scarce, especially in these days of deficit budgets, that we shouldn't be using dollars for the benefit of the governing party. The dollars really have to be used in order to do the things that are important to the people back home.

Now, I understand there has to be some advertising. Obviously, there are things we need to let the public know, and there are mechanisms of advertising that have to be in place in order to allow that to happen. But there has got to be a line drawn when it comes to how we use those dollars and when we use those dollars.

What's clear is, the government that says they fixed this by bringing in legislation some time ago, we find out, actually hasn't fixed it, because there are a number of loopholes with the current legislation that quite frankly allow a Mack truck or a big train—if we had an ONR train—to drive through the gaps within the legislation.

Let me just explain a few of them. One is an egregious part of the existing legislation: There is no mechanism for the auditor of this province to take a look at dollars that are spent for advertising vis-à-vis the Web. There is an ability to take a look at billboards, there's a possibility to take a look at print media and electronic media, but there is no ability for the auditor to take a look at how the government spends money when it comes to the Web.

We know a lot of that happens, and when you look at some of these advertisements—and I have a number of them, Mr. Speaker, but if I lifted them up in the House like this, you would say I'm using a prop, so I won't do that.

1400

But if you look at a lot of the government advertising that's on the Web, much of it is designed in such a way that it gives you the sense this is a piece of Liberal advertising, sometimes by way of the styling of the letters, sometimes by way of the colour combination or both. It's pretty clear that what the government is trying to do is to use this government advertising as a way of showcasing themselves as the governing party so that the reader of the ad would say, "Oh, my God, maybe I should vote for these guys."

I understand: Every political party will do advertising. But we do that out of our political budgets, not the money that the public gives as taxpayers to the province of Ontario. We do that by way of money that we raise within our political parties in order to do advertising either at the constituency level or at the provincial level. That's fair, because that's what elections are about. You need to present your argument, and advertisement is one of the ways of being able to do that. But clearly, the money being used is money that is used by political parties; it's not taxpayers' dollars.

In this case, what we have is the government using a fair amount of money, and some of it is pretty questionable as to, "Is it really about trying to explain a government program or service, or is it really about the government trying to congratulate itself so that people look at that in a partisan way?" We see as we get closer and closer to elections, that there is a larger largesse when it comes to the government's use of government advertising. You'll note that this morning, Christina Blizzard, in her column—

Hon. David Zimmer: She said nice things about the Premier.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Of course.

In Christina Blizzard's article this morning, she was quite right that the government has been ramping up and spending when it comes to advertising in the later parts of their mandate. In this particular case, they're up to about \$30 million over the last little while of government advertising.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, what \$30 million can do in a lot of communities. There are salt trucks that need salt, as I'm finding out, in our particular riding, where I've just been notified by the media that the contractors aren't dropping salt on the highways in freezing rain. I don't know if this is true. This is all I'm being told: that in fact it's because they don't have any more salt. Well, if the contract doesn't allow for salt, maybe some of that \$30 million can go towards buying salt so somebody doesn't get in an accident on Highway 11—or whatever highway it may be—up in northeastern Ontario. There are a lot of services that we can provide to people back home with that \$30 million. At a time where we're struggling to manage with an almost \$12-billion deficit, should we be spending that much money on frivolous advertising that could be better used to put towards lowering our deficit and eventually eliminating it and/or towards services that the people back home need?

There was another wonderful—not a wonderful example, a bad example, of government advertising when it came to what happened with Metrolinx. Metrolinx, an agency of the government, was spending a fair amount of money advertising during the playoff games in the NFL. You ask yourself, why does Metrolinx need to advertise in the middle of the NFL playoffs as a way of being able to do whatever they're trying to communicate with the people of Ontario? It was strictly advertising in order to push their brand. It's not as if people in Ontario have another choice but Metrolinx when it comes to the type of transportation they want in public sector transportation. Clearly, you've got agencies, such as Metrolinx and others, who have spent a fair amount of money on advertising when, quite frankly, that money could have been better used than spending the money they did during those particular NFL playoff games.

The bill is a fairly straight-up bill. All it says is that if a broader public sector organization, be it the Canadian Mental Health Association, children's aid societies, any agency that receives money from the province of Ontario, the province of Ontario themselves—that the ad would have to go before the auditor, and the auditor would have seven days in order to say that it is an ad that is approved or not. It's not as if it's going to slow anything down. There would be a seven-day period in order to give the auditor an opportunity for her and her staff or somebody on the staff to look at this and say, "Okay, clearly, this is something that is of public interest. You can go ahead and use the advertising," or say, "No, this is clearly a government trying to take advantage of public dollars in order to promote themselves rather than the services of the province of Ontario." That's one of the things that the bill does. It's fairly straightforward and fairly simple to give the auditor the opportunity to say yea or nay on that type of advertising—but also to extend the powers of the auditor so that the auditor is able to go and take a look at some of the advertising that they're not able to do now.

Certainly in the case of the Internet, there's an inability on the part of the auditor to look at the expenditures within certain agencies, and there's also an inability for them to look at money that has been spent vis-à-vis the Internet when it comes to advertising. Clearly, this is a gap that we've got to be able to fix. We need to give the auditor the ability to look at that because, as I said, in a time of \$12-billion deficits, we need to be very frugal with our money, and we've got to do everything we can to make sure we're not wasting money on things that are not necessary. If we're spending money in that way—and sometimes it doesn't have to be a heck of a lot—it really sends a bad message to the public.

I use as an example what happened in the last civic election here in Toronto. The then candidate Rob Ford argued that he was going to take away free coffee at the council chambers in Toronto city council as a way of cutting pork, and everybody understood that. My point is, he brought it down to a very simple—you know, something they can understand. When you go to work in the morning, nobody buys your coffee. So why should the

city pay the coffee for the councillors at their meetings? It's a bit of a silly issue, but the point I'm making is this: The public understood it. If the government is spending money, be it a million dollars, \$10 million or \$100 million, on things that are not necessary, we need to make sure that in fact we don't do that and we use our money in places that it's more needed.

Just in the last couple of minutes I've got, I want to pick up on one other part about the particular bill. It seems to me that it's a reasonable step in being able to give the auditor the power that she needs for her and her office to make sure that in fact they can review advertising before it goes out the door, so that it's clearly not partisan advertising but it's advertising news in the way of promoting a government service, much in the same way that we as members, when we use our global budgets, which is the budget we use to operate our constituencies, cannot advertise in any way a partisan message.

We have people here in the civil service of Ontario at the finance branch who review this stuff. If you do a radio ad, a newspaper ad or even an Internet ad or whatever it might be, and you in any way try to show it as being any kind of partisanship, they just don't pay for it. It's as simple as that. Sometimes it's as simple as an error made by the radio station. I had a case about a year ago or two years ago where a radio station was doing an ad for Remembrance Day and, for some reason, the radio ad—I never caught it—said, "Brought to you by Gilles Bisson, NDP member for Timmins-James Bay." Well, they didn't pay for it, and rightfully so. My riding association should pay for that because it said "NDP." So I paid it out of my riding association account and did not submit it to the Legislature, and rightfully so.

What the auditor would be able to do is that type of action, making sure that the government, who is the only one that controls the government advertising budget because it is the government executive that does that, would have a restriction, essentially having the same kinds of rules that all members of this Legislature now have when it comes to not being able to do partisan advertising using government dollars.

Again the last point, and I think this is something we can all agree on: There's a loophole currently within the legislation when it comes to advertising on the Internet. We need to make sure that the auditor has the ability and the power to take a look at agencies and how they're using their public dollars when it comes to advertising on the Internet.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you. I just want to end on a bit of a personal note in the last few seconds that I have. I want to thank all the members who have come to me, over the last couple of days since I've been back, on the passing of my sister, and I just want to say that myself and my family greatly appreciate the support that staff and members here of the assembly have given me. I've just got to say that I'm very touched by the support. If you would have known Louise the way I did, she was one hell of a good woman. Thank you.

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

Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 134, An Act respecting broader public sector advertising. I just wanted to start off by saying that what Mr. Bisson is proposing is essentially expanding what we already have.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I remind the member we stick to ridings, not names.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't mind, Mr. Speaker. She can call me Mr. Bisson any time she wants.

1410

Ms. Dipika Damerla: The MPP for Timmins–James Bay. In a nutshell, what he's doing is this: What is already in place for the government, he would like to extend to the broader public services. I have to say that as a Liberal, in principle I do agree with that, because we are the party that in the first place, one of the first things we did—it's one thing to ask in opposition and say in opposition that government should not be spending money in partisan ways; it's quite another thing to be in government and do that. I'm so proud, as a Liberal, that one of the first acts of this government was to bring in this bill that put the Auditor General in charge of approving any kind of advertising by the government to ensure that it was not politically motivated. It was the right thing to do. It may not always be in the interest of the governing party in terms of partisan stuff to do, but it's the right thing to do for Ontarians. It's the right thing to do for Ontario's taxpayers.

Extending that to the broader public service, again, in principle I agree, because we have consistently been the government standing up for transparency and for what's right for this province. But I do have a couple of questions; one is that one of the reasons it was important to rein in governments when they advertise is because governments in a democracy are politically motivated, but the broader public service is not. The CEO of a broader public service does not stand for elections in the sense of a general election. So their motivation to use partisan advertising isn't there.

While I understand what's motivating the member to bring this idea forward, I think one does have to factor in the costs associated with it. Given that there isn't that motive to advertise on a partisan basis, is this really—again, like I said, it's not the principle or the spirit that I'm objecting to; I'm just asking. It would be a considerable cost to the Auditor General to have to approve every last advertising by a university, a hospital or any of them in the broader public service. Is there really a need for that in that detailed sense when you consider the costs associated, given that they don't have the political motivation that government would have in any democracy? That's the only criticism that I would have. It's always in the details. One can agree with something in principle, but it is in the details that these things need to be worked out.

I would certainly support this going to committee, because perhaps we can look in committee and see. This

is very broad and very sweeping—anything that comes under the broader public service, every last ad, very identical to the government of Ontario, exactly the same parameters. Perhaps there is room to scope it down so that we still get the end result, which is transparency and making sure that if there's any advertising done it's not self-serving but in the interests of the average Ontarian. That said, we also count the dollars and cents that this would cost to actually implement.

The only other thing I very, very quickly want to do is recap the original bill, because, you know, they say that imitation is the best form of flattery. The fact that the member is essentially just word for word extending the old Bill 25 to his bill—I just wanted to recap some of the positives of the original bill that the Liberal government brought forward.

It came into effect on January 30, 2006. As of that date, ministries were prohibited from using items that the auditor has not reviewed and approved. It does make some exceptions. For instance, items are not reviewable under the act when notices are required to be given by law—urgent information affecting public health or safety, job notices for specific positions and information about the provision of goods or services to government. That would be RFPs etc.

The act also requires the Auditor General to review any submitted item and compare it to the following legislated standards. So any ad that does come forward from the government would have to prove that it is a “reasonable means of achieving one or more of the following purposes:

“i. To inform the public of current or proposed government policies, programs or services available to them.

“ii. To inform the public of their rights and responsibilities under the law.

“iii. To encourage or discourage specific social behaviour, in the public interest.

“iv. To promote Ontario or any part of Ontario as a good place to live, work, invest, study or visit or to promote any economic activity or sector of Ontario's economy.”

So once again, I'm going to recap: In principle, I support Mr. Bisson's—sorry, the member from Timmins–James Bay. I support his bill. I would like to see it go to committee and then see if we can perhaps look at making it a better bill.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my privilege to join the debate over Bill 134, the Broader Public Sector Advertising Act. This bill can be thought of as the twin of 2004's Government Advertising Act, which is of course the law that is intended to prevent the government from spending public money on commercial messaging that serves partisan ends.

What the 2004 bill required of government, Bill 134 would require of many, if not most, organizations in the broader public sector. Put the bills side by side and the language of the two bills is almost exactly identical. Bill

134 would give the Auditor General the mandate to review specific types of advertising by broader public sector organizations. This would include all hospitals; school boards; universities; colleges; children's aid societies; community care access centres; agencies, boards and commissions; any publicly funded organization that received public funds of \$10 million in the previous fiscal year, as well as Hydro One, OPG and their subsidiaries.

That is obviously a very large pool of organizations that would be obligated to submit advertising to the Auditor General. More importantly, many of these organizations are more inclined to advertise than general government, which generally speaking has a lower need to generate public awareness. These organizations would be prohibited from publishing, displaying, broadcasting, or distributing the submitted ad until they receive notice that it has been approved. If, for some reason, approval does not come within seven days of submission, the permission is deemed to have been given.

To give you an idea of what kind of bureaucracy this kind of legislation entails, in the Auditor General's last annual report, the 572 individual advertising items were submitted for review in 130 submissions. The auditor's office averaged 3.1 days turnaround time. This time to render a verdict varies. The office reportedly averages 3.5 days per submission.

Last year, no government ads submitted to the Auditor General were found to be in violation of the Government Advertising Act. Of course, this is small print here. Three ministries ran ads without abiding by the act, with ads run by the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care found to be in violation of the act after the fact. These kinds of end runs are reported every year. But despite that, the Auditor General has had generally favourable things to say about the 2004 legislation.

It is not without its shortcomings, however. It didn't anticipate the prominence of websites, online advertising or social media. It doesn't formally address advertising in event programs. It is quiet on the matter of third party advertising paid for using public money. It doesn't formally mention payment in kind. Instead, these matters are all covered by informal understandings between government offices and the auditor. Yet despite this chumminess, the Liberal government has in recent years moved to weaken the 2004 legislation by narrowing the definition of what is actually partisan. Heeding the objections of the Ombudsman, the government wisely dropped those plans.

None of these shortcomings are addressed in Bill 134. Nor does Bill 134 seek to improve the power of the 2004 act. Instead, it promises to create an ocean of red tape that would surely swamp the Auditor General's office with an endless job queue and distract that office from doing the work that provides such a great service to the public.

1420

Rather than making existing legislation stronger and more transparent, rather than debating legislation and

policies that will put our economy back to work, we're debating legislation that is, as I said earlier, tightly modelled on the 2004 act. It contains most of the same oversights, it offers no solutions, and in fact it has the very real potential to create considerable problems while diverting the energy of the Auditor General from critical reviews that yield many more benefits.

I'm sorry, Speaker, but I cannot support this.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 134, An Act respecting broader public sector advertising. The bill is being introduced by my colleague the member from Timmins–James Bay. It is in keeping with New Democrats putting forward ideas that give greater clarity and transparency to how we spend money in this province.

Speaker, as you know, government ads have to be vetted by the Auditor General. This is set out in legislation. It requires that a ministry, Cabinet Office or the Office of the Premier must submit their advertisements to the Office of the Auditor General for review. The government office is then prohibited from publishing, displaying or broadcasting the ad before the head of that office receives notice from the Auditor General that the ad is acceptable to certain standards.

But advertisements for government agencies, those "broader public sector" entities such as Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation, Infrastructure Ontario or Metrolinx, don't require the same scrutiny as government ads. Therefore, no one is overseeing whether these ads are neutral, whether they're appropriate and whether they're non-partisan. No one is reviewing the possible political motives attached to these ads.

This bill, Bill 134, would change all of that. This bill specifies which advertisements, printed matter and other classes of messages must be reviewed. It outlines required standards that the ads must meet for these broader-sector entities—no more free-for-all.

Ads paid for by taxpayers should not be promoting the political motives of government parties, no matter if they're Liberal, PC or NDP. It's time to ensure that taxpayers are getting the best bang for their buck.

Speaker, let me quickly tell you about a recent ad campaign by the government agency Metrolinx. I think we're all familiar with it in the House. I know the NDP spoke out very publicly against it, even asking the provincial auditor to probe such spending.

My friend Keith Leslie works for the Canadian Press. He wrote a story on the 21st of January featuring my colleague the MPP from Parkdale–High Park. Ms. DiNovo was watching a Sunday NFL conference championship game with her husband and was blown away when she saw advertising for Metrolinx during the game.

Metrolinx, for those of you tuning in today from outside the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, is the provincial crown agency trusted to provide transportation in the GTHA.

We all know that transportation is a touchy subject around Toronto, what with all the fights and squabbles

over subway extensions, light rapid transit, streetcars and gridlock, and we know that there never seems to be enough money to fund all of the improvements that are requested. And we know already that transit will be a key plank in the next election campaign.

So why, the MPP from Parkdale–High Park was asking, are these Metrolinx ads on TV? What did Metrolinx hope to accomplish? Here is one of her quotes: “These are precious dollars ... Are they selling Liberal politics? If not, what is it that they’re selling?”

Speaker, let me tell you something. This story was so weird and unusual that it was carried verbatim in the Winnipeg Free Press, and Metrolinx means nothing to voters in Manitoba. It was picked up by the Harbour City Star in BC, the Nanaimo Daily News and even Global-Post, which bills itself as “America’s world news site.” Those are just some of the places where eyebrows were raised by this story.

In fact, the ads cost Metrolinx \$237,000, money that could have been used for transit instead of feeding some egos at Metrolinx or, indeed, money for a soft-sell, arm’s-length promotional ad for the Liberal government and its transportation priorities.

Metrolinx, according to the Toronto Sun last August, spent nearly \$11 million on self-promotion and building its brand. Here’s an agency that gets money from the taxpayer to provide transit, and they promote their brand at a cost of nearly \$11 million. It’s not like they have much in the way of competition. I agree with my colleague from Parkdale–High Park: People want their transit money spent on transportation, not on glitzy ad campaigns. It’s a basic principle; it’s taxpayers’ money.

Speaker, as you know, in politics, perception can become reality. There’s a perception out there that Metrolinx advertising is a subtle—or maybe not so subtle—way of promoting a Liberal government agenda. Let’s end that perception now, before we’re stuck with that reality. Adopt this bill, and give the Auditor General the power to approve proposed advertising from Metrolinx, Hydro One, Infrastructure Ontario and all the other crown agencies. Take the politics out of the equation.

Thank you, Speaker, and kudos to the member for Timmins–James Bay for bringing forward such a great bill and shining a bright light on such a dark aspect of warped government spending priorities.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: At the outset, I would like to begin by offering, as well, on behalf of the government side, as I did, I think, personally, with the member from Timmins–James Bay, our sympathies, prayers and condolences for the recent family tragedy that he experienced.

With that, I would also like to say that I will, I think, broadly support Bill 134, the private member’s bill brought forward by my colleague from Timmins–James Bay. It’s largely in agreement with our own initiatives from the Ministry of Government Services, which I remind every one of you in the House is headed by a

remarkably agile minister who, by the way, holds a doctorate in philosophy in NATO Cold War Studies—probably an ideal qualification for being House leader here.

Interjection.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: A very able parliamentary assistant; I agree with you, Minister.

I would just remind folks why this bill—the initial incarnation of this bill—actually came forward. That was courtesy of the almost half a billion dollars—our colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh is talking about a \$300,000 expenditure with Metrolinx. Half a billion dollars over that eight-year mandate of those lost Harris–Eves years was spent on what can only be described as blatant self-promotional advertising, to the point where not only was it your tax dollars at work bearing the previous Premier Mike Harris’s signature, but we’re also talking video testimonials.

One personal beef I have, as a physician: The universal colour of anything to do with health care is red, as in the Red Cross, red blood and so on. We were probably the only jurisdiction to have—suddenly our ambulances were turned blue. I invite you to investigate that particular aspect.

We are, as I say, member from Timmins–James Bay, the honourable Gilles Bisson, largely in agreement with your bill. I think we’re probably going to support it and vote it into committee for some adjustments and fine-tuning. But I would like to say that your bill probably paints with too broad a brush stroke. Some of that was highlighted by my other colleagues here, and was cited by the Conservative side as well.

I’ll give you an example. You’re looking at having the Auditor General regulate, I think, what is probably more than almost 700 different agencies and their advertising: hospitals, school boards, universities, colleges, CCACs, Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation, children’s aid societies, hydro entities, even, by the way, from closer to home, public health units. So, for example, when a public health unit largely and very aggressively sends advertising out there—by the way, not only to the public but also directed at physicians—to alert and awaken Ontarians to get themselves checked out for cervical, breast or colon cancer, to sign that organ donation card, to think about having a carbon monoxide monitor in your home, I hope you would agree that that is genuine public interest.

As an example, we, as doctors, know that the lists, unfortunately—for example, side effects of diabetes, heart disease and stroke, which essentially cause huge numbers of people to be on waiting lists for organ transplantation, continue to expand with no real end in sight. That was, by the way, part of the initiative to encourage Ontarians, whether on the Web, video, YouTube or other avenues, to get folks to sign up for organ donation. I think that’s very valuable and very important.

1430

Similarly, tourism: Every time Prince Edward County, Niagara Falls, Toronto Island, Blue Mountain and some of our other attractions come forward with advertising, it

would really, I think, be counterproductive to have to have the AG's office or any office of Parliament sign off on that particular legislation.

Similarly, consumer protection: You, yourself, MPP from Timmins–James Bay, have raised, very appropriately, issues of aggressive sales, for example, at the doorstep, trying to snare seniors to sign contracts, whether it's for hydro power distribution and so on. You yourself have raised issues about those high-pressure tactics in this House and consumer protection campaigns that are directed to alert vulnerable seniors and other vulnerable populations. These, again, are part and parcel of, I would say, the broader public sector.

We support your bill. We are very much on side, as my minister and the very able parliamentary assistant from the Ministry of Government Services testified. This was originally brought forward to what was a wholly abusive level of advertising—probably, by the way, what is also being mimicked, probably this very hour, on the federal side, by the federal Tories: the almost half a billion dollars that was spent in absolutely blatant self-promotional advertising.

I remember—I think Michael Bryant was the minister of the day—when we presented that legislation. We were very proud to support it, so we certainly support your legislation in its overall thrust, if not all of the details.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to start first by recognizing the member from Timmins–James Bay, a long-serving member. To have a sibling pass on before you is tragic. I extend my sympathies. I know how close she was; I think I did meet your sister at one time, as well, at one of the events we did.

Anyway, the bill itself—turning the page onto something a little less positive, we would not be supporting the bill, as I understand it. But the sentiment here is very important. The arguments being made about the waste of money in advertising are very clear.

Myself, I do use Metrolinx—the GO train, I guess you'd call it. It's one more example, though, where the government has completely screwed up another file. Metrolinx—what's this about?

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, they messed it up; that's an appropriate word. I'd say that the file—I ride the train all the time. Then I see all these ads. As somebody said earlier, it's a monopoly. Get over it. What are they advertising? I can't go and take any other thing, unless it's Greyhound, which isn't subsidized anyway.

But that's only part of the story. I think if you look at it, the bill itself is a mountain of red tape and it creates more organizations, just sorting out—that's organizations that get over \$10 million, in one section of the bill, that are being controlled here. Bill 134 will swamp the Auditor General's office, as she has limited staff and endless work to review the advertising when more and more pressing matters are at hand.

I happen to be a member of the AG committee. They are overworked at the moment and there's more work to

be done. The biggest disappointment in all of this is that they're advertising things over and over again, and I think it sends the wrong message to the people who are paying for it. It's all taxpayer money.

These organizations like the LCBO—there's another one. Gee, I can't believe it. You go in to pick up a small bottle of wine or something and they give you this \$20 booklet with advertising—glossy pages, very heavy print. What's that about? It's a monopoly. Get over it. I mean, you can't buy it except by going there. If you want something, you have to go there to get it. And they build these opulent stores. What's that all about? We've got the most expensive real estate holdings with the LCBO, anchor stores in plazas. You could sell that out of a tent and people would still be lined up at Christmas and Easter and all that to buy.

The waste of money in advertising is clear. That sentiment of the bill I support. The regulatory part of it is not well written, and I suspect that the bill may pass because the Liberals will probably agree with it; they have a coalition now. When they agree with things like this, they will often send it to committee. What will happen then—the viewers should know that private members' business is just that. I commend the member for bringing it forward. It troubles him; portions of it trouble me. It's how it has been written, and the regulations within it are troubling to me. It will probably pass, with the support of their friends the Liberals, and go to committee. When it goes to committee, the viewers should know, it will probably never see the light of day. That's the unfortunate way it works.

Good ideas should be put forward. That was one today by Mr. Wilson from Simcoe–Grey—it should have been passed—on Christmas trees. What's wrong with that? I'll leave to my colleague from Oshawa—he's been dying to speak on this bill. Our critic on this file, Mr. Fedeli, was unable to make it. He regrets that. The member from Oshawa is replacing him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. I was the one who wrote the letter—I didn't ever get a response to the letter—about my shock at seeing Metrolinx advertising during the Super Bowl game. The Super Bowl is, let's face it, a huge event with hugely expensive advertising attached to it, geared mainly, one would think, at an American audience.

I have to say, this is within the context of our fight locally in Parkdale–High Park—not just local; throughout five ridings—for the electrification of the air-rail link. I know my friend from Davenport has tabled a bill to this effect. The answer we get back from the Minister of Transportation, the answer we get back from Metrolinx, is they can't do it in time, i.e. it's too expensive. Basically, they just don't have the money. They don't have the money to make the air-rail link electric—and also, by the way, tie it into the transportation system so that we can use it for actual transportation, not just for wealthy tourists for a two-week sporting event. They don't have

the money for that, but they do have some \$30 million this government spent over three months to advertise during a Super Bowl. This makes no sense. Not only does it not make any sense, it actually fuels the anger that is being felt in my riding against this government on the transportation file.

You heard earlier from, again, my friend from Trinity–Spadina about how we used to upload 50% of the operating costs of the TTC. We don't. We haven't under the Mike Harris Progressive Conservatives, and we don't under the Wynne Liberals. We could, but again the answer is, "We don't have the money." "We don't have the money" is the answer for so much with this government, yet they do have the money to advertise Metrolinx during the Super Bowl. Come on. I mean, is it only the New Democrats who feel this outrage? I would conjecture absolutely not. There are many across Ontario who feel this outrage. Of course, one could go on. The gas plant scandal, eHealth, Ornge—\$3 billion has gone out the window for all of those three scandals. But to add insult to injury, then to see government agencies advertise on television—to who, for what, is the question. To who, for what? Who are they trying to convince? It's not like we have a choice. They're the only government agencies there are. Why are they advertising? To talk about how wonderful they are? Please.

That also demands some response, because I can tell you that it salted the wounds when Metrolinx advertises, in five communities. It's not just downtown communities; it's York South–Weston. I can imagine the member from York South–Weston hears from her constituents every time a Metrolinx ad airs, particularly during the Super Bowl, and I'm sure what she hears is this: "Why does your government have money to spend on expensive advertising but not on us so that we can get downtown, not on us so that our children can breathe fresh air?"

Because we know Metrolinx just released their environmental assessment. Wow, finally. The Toronto Board of Health weighed in years ago, but finally Metrolinx is admitting that, yes, diesel trains running by the hundreds through our backyards aren't good for our health. Wow. They finally admitted that. But when we ask them, "Okay, so when are you going to be replacing them with electric trains? Or why don't you do it right the first time, save yourself some money?", that, we don't get an answer for. The only answer we've received is, "Can't afford it. Can't get it done." Again, it's a money issue—a money issue when it comes to the health of residents, but not a money issue when it comes to putting forward the Liberal platform using taxpayers' dollars. Then there's endless amounts of money to be spent—endless amounts.

I'm sad, actually, that our colleagues to the right in more ways than one, the Progressive Conservatives, are not supporting this. I thought they were against wasteful spending. This is an anti-wasteful-spending bill. I don't get it.

1440

My friend from Durham talks about the LCBO. The point he misses about the LCBO of course is that the

profit stays with us. This is one of those government agencies that actually does a good job and their profit stays with us and funds so much of our social services. So it's not just the taxes; it's the profit as well. He missed that point. It's an important point.

But to get back to our House leader's bill, the member from Timmins–James Bay, of course this is a no-brainer. If the government truly believes in transparency, truly believes in value and truly believes that every dollar that taxpayers entrust to us is precious—and it should be—then they would certainly support it too. I expect that they will.

But I would go further than that. I would go further than just support. I would say, "Let's not just support it. Let's not just bury it in committee. Let's actually bring it into being." Only the government can do that. People are confused in a minority government. Let's say it clearly: Only the government can make this law and the government should make this law.

I would love to hear any explanation for not making this law. What can the explanation be? "We like to spend money advertising for the Liberal Party under the guise of government agencies." That's the true answer, surely. That really is the honest answer: "We like it." The Liberal government likes to advertise for the Liberal Party under the guise of government agencies. They like to tell the taxpayer that they are doing wonderful things with their tax dollars, using their tax dollars. That's what they like to do.

I see the political advantage in this but I absolutely do not see the ethicality or the morality in this. I don't think any one of our taxpayers would either.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak about Bill 134.

I want to send a bit of caution to the wind. I very much appreciate the intention the member from Timmins–James Bay is trying to move forward here, and I fully agree with the intent of it. But we as politicians have to look beyond that. We attempt to pasteurize and purify everything to such an extent that we nullify our existence in this Legislature.

Let me expand on that. I can tell you, when I was the PA for northern development and mines, we had the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. When we would do announcements in northern Ontario, the amount of funds that were spent on advertising were very small comparatively speaking to FedNor. FedNor and the federal Liberal government would come in and make a \$200,000 announcement but would spend \$150,000 on advertising and give the organization or the entity \$50,000. Quite frankly, it was far reversed when we had that opportunity.

What I'm trying to get to is when we look at this and where the next steps are going from this—currently, if you look at the fishing regulations and hunting regulations in the province of Ontario, they're virtually non-existent. Locally, Gagnon Sports used to receive in

excess of 5,000 fishing regulations to hand out on an annual basis. Now they're given 50—from 5,000 to 50—in order to cut back on costs because it's more effective.

When I was my sons' age now, Josh and Garrett, I can tell you one of the things I used to love to read was the maps that came out from the MNR for the regulations, whether they be hunting or fishing regulations. I always loved to read the minister's comments. It was something that inspired me to come to this chamber.

Now, one of the things that Minister Bryant did when he was in there was he eliminated that opportunity to inspire those individuals by eliminating any ability. When the third party was in power, the same Ministry of Natural Resources utilized something and their former leader, Howard Hampton, when he was the leader, ran MNR fact sheets and they were great. I loved them. I used to read them. They would give you all the details about moose and expanding deer populations and what was happening in the province of Ontario. But it was politically incorrect to do that because the perception was there that it was designed to gain political advantage in some way, shape or form. Quite frankly, I don't necessarily believe that all those things that took place were actually designed for political advantage.

A lot of the individuals out there, when they find you're a member of the Legislature, think you're part of government anyway. The average public out there—we have to make sure that the things we do do not remove us—well, it depends on how you handle it. Some members may not, but if there are announcements made in your riding, they certainly think that you're the cause for it, and certainly a lot of individuals would act in those fashions. But blatant political advertising to promote a single cause is something that I don't believe anybody in here agrees with or would support. However, I want to make sure that when we look at these decisions, they're fully thought out on the impacts in many ways, because there are many things that inspire a lot of Ontarians to come forward, to get involved and participate, and I want to make sure that continues on to the best of our ability.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I want to thank everybody for participating in the debate. It's rather interesting. I kind of expected that the Tories were going to support this and the Liberals were going to oppose it. Instead I'm getting completely the opposite, and I just find it interesting. I think the government understands that what this bill is an attempt to do is to close some of the loopholes that presently exist. There have been changes to the methods of advertising since the original legislation came in, and I think the government has come to the conclusion it may not be a bad idea to take a look at them. It will be interesting to see how much support we get at committee and to what degree it comes out of committee for third reading. That's yet to be seen.

But the Conservatives—I thought you guys were the ones who were supposed to be concerned about the tax-

payers' dime. I suspect the reason you're not supporting this is you think you might be a government and you would like to do some of this advertising yourselves. So that's the only thing that I can think of why you would vote—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Call me cynical if you want, but I've been here a lot of years and I've seen a lot of things. This is an interesting one, Conservatives voting against a bill like this.

I would just ask the Conservatives to reconsider. This is a bill that you can send to committee. If you think there are changes that have to be made, my God, do you think I'm going to get offended? I've been around this place too long to get offended on an amendment of a bill that's been drafted. If you think there's a better way of doing it, a more efficient way of doing it or something that was left out—certainly, allow that to happen in committee. But I just say again, I just find it passing strange that Conservatives would oppose a bill that is attempting to make sure we don't spend taxpayers' dollars needlessly; and when we see Conservatives do that, we ask ourselves, “What is that all about?” I think I've said pretty well what I've had to say in that regard.

With that, I'd like to thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Mr. Paul Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act /
Projet de loi 174, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de
retraite.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I'm here today to speak about my Bill 174, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act. I'd like to thank the NDP researchers and my staff for all the hard work they've done on this bill.

When I was first elected, in 2007, I told the NDP leader that I wanted to take action to protect pensions and to make working life and retirement better for all workers in our province. To achieve that goal, I worked with my colleagues to bring forward an Ontario pension plan that would provide a provincial pension plan similar to the Canada Pension Plan, portable to any employment in Ontario, managed by public pension plan administrators and protected for life. It was a good idea that the current government has taken and remodeled, but what hasn't yet come to legislation is protection for those workers whose

employer closes up shop and winds down their pension plans. For these retirees, they face a reduction in their retirement income by more than a half, in some cases.

This is their money, taken from their paycheques, money they saved in their company pension plan, money that they will lose in the case of a pension plan being wound down by their employer. Many retirees depend not only on their monthly retirement income but in some cases the benefit plan that went with their retirement package. Although we cannot legislate continuance of a benefit package, we can legislate better protection of retirees' monthly income.

When the government engaged Professor Harry Arthurs to investigate and report on pensions and how we can provide better security for the pension system, one of the things that he recommended was an increase in the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund.

1450

This fund was created in the 1980s to provide some protection for retirees whose pension plan was wound up. As noted in the Arthurs report, the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund is funded by a levy on plan sponsors based on a per capita premium of \$1 per year, plus a risk premium that varies according to the level at which the plan is funded. The higher the level of funding, the lower the portion of the premium, to an annual maximum of \$4 million.

The PBGF benefit formula has not changed since its inception in 1980, while the premium rates were last revised in 1992.

The PBGF ensures that in the event of a plan failure, retirees will receive compensation sufficient to bring their pension benefits, subject to some exclusions, up to a maximum of \$1,000 per month. Professor Arthurs recommended that the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund be increased to reflect what the current value of these 1980 dollars would be, which is \$2,500 a month.

That's why, today, I'm proud to come before this House to introduce Bill 174, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act. If enacted, this bill will amend the Pension Benefits Act to raise the amount guaranteed by the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund from \$1,000 to \$2,500 a month. Even my colleagues down the aisle should be happy to support this bill because, as you know, the pension benefit fund was created by former PC Premier Bill Davis. He realized, as do I, that people work hard all their lives and defer their earnings to a pension plan. The least they should expect is what comes to them at the end of their working days. If they cannot count on the retirement income that they contributed over decades, what can they count on?

Unfortunately, Speaker, this is not the case. As we speak, the pensions of thousands of Ontarians are in jeopardy. At Nortel, we saw thousands of hard-working Ontarians not only lose their retirement savings but their medical benefits as well. At Stelco, now US Steel, workers and retirees face the same threat in 2015. This is the case for workers and businesses, large and small, all across this province and industries.

As noted in the Arthurs report, under ill-advised regulations adopted in the 1990s to assist Ontario's major private sector employees, plans deemed to be too big to fail were permitted to elect to be relieved of solvency funding requirements in exchange for paying additional PBGF premiums, to a maximum of \$5 million per plan.

Retirement security continues to be an issue which keeps families up at night worrying about their financial future. They don't have the sweetheart compensation packages like some of the executives walk away with.

Speaker, it's not just my office which hears about this. It's not just a Hamilton issue. Members across all party lines and from across this province receive calls and emails about this issue frequently.

Yesterday I was given a letter by a colleague who received it from a concerned constituent. It reads, "I am a retired employee.

"When I retired, the pension plan and company benefits fund were in a surplus situation.

"They last reported the fund's condition three years ago, announcing a \$300-million deficit in the ... fund.

"As they have not had to report or contribute to the fund in the last three years, I am worried about the current deficit."

The owners of the company "are, piecemeal, selling off assets and not making the required investments" to keep up the plan.

"They recently sold [assets and leases] which netted them \$800 million" without making their contribution.

"Rather than use this money properly, they distributed a \$5 dividend to shares worth about \$18 at the time.

"Worse, they have announced that they will probably make another special dividend sometime in 2014 for \$4 per share."

Speaker, at this single company, 12,000 retired employees and employee spouses will suffer.

This constituent ended their letter noting that they are appealing to the members of this House "to try and get pension plans and benefit fund status when a company goes bankrupt."

They "ask that I convince the appropriate governments to legislate the elimination of shortfalls in pension plans and protect benefits."

Sadly, this is the case for tens of thousands of Ontario residents who are either currently relying on their pensions or will be upon retirement.

Although the government has proposed an Ontario pension plan, we have yet to see any details. Additionally, I have not heard what commitment it will make to those many retirees who have had their planned retirement income completely upset and may not receive anything near what they have saved or planned for.

This bill is not just designed to protect single workers and their families; rather, it will protect whole communities. Many of our rural and northern communities rely heavily on one single industry or business. We've seen entire communities devastated with a plant closure or business closure. This situation is made exponentially worse when retirees of those same companies are left

without their pensions. If people don't get their monthly pension benefits, how can they support their families, let alone their local businesses? I think the answer is quite simple: They cannot.

The Liberal government has had the Arthurs report since October 31, 2008. Recommendation 6-17 of the Arthurs report states: "The level of monthly pension benefits eligible for protection by the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund should be increased to a maximum of \$2,500 to reflect the effect of inflation on the original"—1980s—"maximum of \$1,000."

Most of the people collecting pensions from the 1970s and 1980s are below the \$1,000 mark. It doesn't help anyone above the \$1,000 mark, and that's where 90% of the pensions are today.

Additionally, the Arthurs report in 2008 recommended that "The superintendent (or other agency responsible for the administration of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund) should recommend to the Minister of Finance within one year:

"—the formula by which benefit levels should be determined on a going-forward basis;

"—the basis on which the levy paid by sponsors should be calculated;

"—procedures for ensuring that both the benefits and the levy are adjusted at regular intervals; and

"—any other matter relevant to the implementation of this recommendation."

This section of the report concludes that the recommendations should be accompanied by a statement concerning the anticipated effects of any such adjustment, and the minister should act promptly upon receipt of these recommendations and the accompanying statement. Speaker, that should have happened in 2009. It's 2014. It has been five and a half years.

People in this Legislature should be paying attention, because we all have retirees, many of them, and we're a growing population of elderly in this province. We see nothing from the government or the official opposition. Does this government consider this a prompt response?

If we do not act soon, people face the possibility of losing up to 50% of their pensions. As seniors are living longer and having less income than ever before, even those with good pensions will not have enough to get by in 20 years.

These people built our province. They deserve a life with dignity, a retirement of dignity. That's why I'm asking you all in this House to support Bill 174. We can do something in this House to protect the hard-working Ontarians of this province, the seniors of our province and the working people of our society.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Before I ask for further debate, I'd ask everyone to kind of curb the chitchat that's going around in the chamber. It's a little noisy, and difficult to hear the speaker.

Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a great honour for me to have the chance to stand in my place today and speak to Bill 174. I listened very closely as the member who is

sponsoring this particular private member's bill, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, provided his contribution to the discussion around this particular measure.

I wanted to begin by saying that not only am I happy to have the chance to speak regarding the issue—because it is a very important issue for people, I'm sure, in his community of Hamilton and mine of Vaughan, and to individuals living right across the province of Ontario—I'm also happy to let him know that while I may take issue with some of the specific details of some of the commentary that was provided in debate by the member who is sponsoring this particular bill, I feel it is important, after the discussion is done here today, that this bill should move on to committee. Therefore, I will be supporting the undertaking from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

It's interesting that near the end of his remarks, he did talk about the importance—because we do have so many individuals living in our respective communities for whom this is an issue, for whom the entire notion of pensions and retirement security is not just an issue of concern but, for many people, a looming crisis.

For example, tomorrow in my own community, I will be attending something that is being organized by a series of seniors' organizations and seniors' clubs and that is called the healthy seniors round table. I expect somewhere between 300 and 500 seniors will be at this event tomorrow. It's good that the minister responsible for seniors and other special guests will be there with us tomorrow.

But I know already, having spent a lot of time talking to seniors living in my community and others who are approaching their retirement years, that the issue of pensions, the issue of retirement security will be top of mind for them. I know, from talking in our own government caucus to individuals representing communities from right across Ontario, be it from the north, from the east, the southwest, wherever folks are coming from, that this is something that we are hearing about, loud and clear, from people that we are here to represent. Something needs to be done with respect to ensuring that individuals have a greater sense of security and a greater level of income support in their retirement years.

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To the point the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek raised, again near the end of his remarks, these are, after all, the individuals who have worked their entire lives to build the community, to build both the physical and the social infrastructure that we rely on. When I look at my six-year-old and my three-year-old daughters, I think about what we want to leave to them but I also realize, very importantly, how blessed I am because I am an individual who is growing up in a community, growing up in a region—and frankly in a province—where those who have come before us have made such an exceptional contribution. And the responsibility falls to us here in this place at this particular juncture to make sure that as individuals are getting closer to that point of

retiring, or have already retired, their governments—I would argue both federal and provincial—step in and demonstrate leadership on this issue and come forward with a plan; at least begin the dialogue, begin the discussion to develop a plan that will enhance the retirement security that I believe these people deserve.

That's why I'm extremely proud to be a member of this particular government, a government that over the last number of months, under the leadership of Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa, has worked so hard to begin this dialogue, to take it to that next level, to strongly encourage the federal government, not in an adversarial way, but to strongly urge the federal government to work with us and to work with the rest of the provinces to enhance the Canada Pension Plan. I think everybody would recognize right across this country, and certainly across Ontario, that it is extremely important—more so than important—that the Canada Pension Plan is almost a fundamental pillar of the society we have.

Folks in my riding love the Canada Pension Plan. They think it's a great thing. They think the fact that it's secure, that it's solid, that it's providing support for them, is important. But there's a clear recognition, as the member from Trinity–Spadina just said, and certainly we recognize on this side of the House, that the \$12,000 or \$12,500 that CPP pays out is not enough anymore, especially for middle-class families and middle-class workers who have spent their lives working so hard, raising their families, playing by the rules, paying their taxes, contributing to society, only to find out as they enter their retirement that they are no longer able to support themselves in a manner that's consistent with what they deserve from my estimation, from my perspective—and that's not good. That's not good for us as a society. It's not even good for us economically, frankly, because ultimately they'll have to rely on additional services that will cost the treasury.

The fact of the matter is that months ago Premier Wynne decided that this was something we needed to get done, it was something we needed to do right. She reached out to her provincial counterparts; she reached out to the federal government. Unfortunately, for reasons that I can't fathom, and the people from my community can't fathom, the federal Conservative government was completely and totally unwilling to even enter into a discussion with the provinces regarding creating some kind of pan-Canadian pension enhancement. It appears that ship has sailed, Speaker, unfortunately. I would strongly urge here today that the federal Conservative government representatives who may be watching or may hear about this later reconsider that decision, because it's not in the best interests of people from coast to coast to coast.

Having said that, Speaker, our Premier and our finance minister here in Ontario have made it very clear that, witnessing that abdication of leadership from the federal Conservative government, we are going to move forward with a made-in-Ontario pension enhancement or pension

plan. We recognize that this is important. It is the right thing to do socially. It's the right thing in terms of making sure that we continue to provide for those who have built what we now continue to enjoy, and it's also important even from an economic perspective.

So, as I wrap up very quickly, I do applaud the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for bringing this measure back to this House, to this discussion. I look forward to supporting the bill today and I look forward to the rest of the discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the responsibility, as the Progressive Conservative critic for retirement security, to be able to respond to Bill 174, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

This is a simple and unassuming bill. It's only one page in length, and it proposes to amend the workings of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund by raising the cap on benefits paid from the fund. The cap is now \$1,000 per month. Bill 174 would move the cap up to \$2,500 per month. But here's the problem: The fund is unfunded—not underfunded but unfunded—in practical terms, compared to the claims on the horizon. It hasn't had money to fund claims itself for four years. I'm actually amazed that the member from Stoney Creek is proposing increasing this amount as the key to his bill, because it really is nothing but a mirage. The Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund is like an insurance policy. Ontario's private employers subscribe to it if they offer a corporate plan to employees. The fund pays pension benefits to eligible private pension plan members if the host company cannot because of bankruptcy.

If we look a little deeper into the composition of the fund, 49% of the covered plans have 100 to 999 members, 36% have fewer than 100 members, and less than 1% of covered plans have over 10,000 members. In total, the fund has over 1.1 million plan members—48% active, 36% pensioners and 16% deferred pensioners. In the membership, there is a significant concentration in the manufacturing sector, which represents 59% of all plans, 54% of all plan members and 87% of current claims withdrawing from the fund. Over 73% of member plans are in a deficit position on a solvency basis. This is one indicator that tells us that this fund may be drawn down more in the future.

The fund was set up in 1980 by Premier Bill Davis to be self-financing, but it has been far from that, unfortunately, for a long time now. The premium structure hasn't changed since 1993, which is \$1 per member, plus a risk fee based on the financials of the plan. In its present form, the fund is outdated and unworkable. The cost to the economy to try to salvage it would require premiums to be increased by 1,000%—hardly a responsible initiative.

Don Drummond, in his report of 2012, recommended “that the province either terminate the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund or explore the possibility of transferring it to a private insurer. The fund is no longer sustainable

in its current form as it presents a large fiscal risk for the province.”

Since 2010, over a billion taxpayer dollars have been infused into the fund because of its deficit. The fund simply was not designed for today’s economic realities and gives a false sense of security to Ontario’s private pensioners and their employers. Without government bailouts, the fund would be defunct. The government has known the fund has been in a deficit since 2008 and has done nothing about it. They know it’s a mirage that lulls the dread of private pensioners.

Over the last decade, the Liberals have squandered their time in office—half of those years with a good economy. It could have tackled the real issues; it has not. Stewardship of the province’s finances and preventing the failure of systems that people rely on are the real issues of government.

Former finance minister Dwight Duncan and Premier McGuinty promised reform and commissioned reports. They promised the government would fix the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. This government stalled on that and made the situation worse by effectively bailing out the fund. As far as comprehensive retirement security options for Ontarians, this government has also stalled on their promises to allow pooled registered pension plans.

Be sure to look for answers in the budget a couple of weeks from now. There are two ways to go for the fund: either tackle the problem or, as is the practice of this government, throw money at it to escape accountability. This government never does the hard work of finding efficiencies by reform, and this bill, Bill 174, helps the government ignore the problem.

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

1510

Mr. Taras Natyshak: From the outset, I would like to congratulate my colleague, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Mr. Miller. In his preamble to his bill, he said that when he was first elected in 2007, he told the NDP leader at that time that he wanted to make this issue a priority and something that he championed. I can tell you first-hand that he has certainly done that during his tenure as a member.

I can recall—I don’t even know if he does recall, but Mr. Miller came down to my neck of the woods in Windsor and Essex county during a situation that evolved around a company called Aradco-Aramco. Do you remember that? It was a situation where the company had declared bankruptcy and was attempting to liquidate all of its assets without paying its debt to the workers, and abdicating its responsibility, whether it be pensions or benefits. The workers occupied the two plants. Labour activists from all around gathered, and Paul was right there, as was I. We talked about pensions. We talked about the need to protect pensions and the lack of legislative accountability and legislative fortitude to back up workers who find themselves in these predicaments. Of course, I certainly have seen them in my region.

General Chemical is one that stands out, where workers were left high and dry when the company left

the town of Amherstburg and continued its profitable operations in the United States but left workers at the bottom of the list when it came to their obligations around pensions. Specifically in Amherstburg, it precipitated the federal leader of the NDP at that time, Jack Layton, to make it a priority to address the issue at the federal level, where a bill was put forward that would have called on the federal government to change the rules so that workers would be paid first upon insolvency or bankruptcy. It was called the “Workers First” bill.

I actually campaigned during the 2008 campaign on that policy, and it resonated. Not only did it resonate with pensioners or those who were about to retire but it resonated with young people, because those who are looking to enter the job market understand right now that things are so dire that older workers have to remain in the workforce because they don’t have defined benefit plans and they don’t feel secure in their workplaces and they know that at any moment, even though they’ve contributed to a pension plan their entire careers, it could be wiped out. There is so much insecurity out there.

One of the metrics that we saw today—I don’t know if anyone has referenced it, but just this morning, as I woke up and I turned on CBC Newsworld, they told me that the top 86 income earners in the country, the richest 86 Canadians, have the combined wealth of the poorest 11 million in the country. There is a disparity between the rich and the poor that continues to grow and really begs us to pay attention to what workers face and, of course, what older workers, in particular, face.

The pension benefits guarantee and the reforms that my colleague is proposing today—the pension benefits guarantee I see as a backstop, a pension of last resort. When all else has failed, the government, in its wisdom, at one point or another, decided that we had to be there. We had to come up with something to backstop the failures of pension plans out there in the private sector when they did fail. Of course, various incarnations of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund have been around. We saw in the mid-1990s where they deemed some of the contributors to the pension benefits guarantee too big to fail. I guess times were good. But then we saw that that was a mistake. We saw that when we allowed some flexibility in contributions to the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, it didn’t necessarily equal out to profitability or security of those larger corporations.

So we should never go there again, I submit. But what we should recognize is that since the fund was set up, times have changed. Things have gotten more expensive. The needs and requirements of seniors and retirees in this province have become greater. It is why I’m pleased to support the reforms that are proposed by my colleague the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: raising that \$1,000-a-month guarantee to \$2,500.

I want to acknowledge—and maybe just as a last note—that this is an issue that is far-reaching and broad in its scope in terms of retirees. These aren’t simply private sector blue-collar workers. These are white-collar workers in large multinationals who are fearful of their pension plans.

I have a letter from Cody Cooper from my area, who is doing a lot of great work with Chrysler retirees. The Chrysler Canada Retirees Organization board of directors—Cody Cooper, Harold Dawe, Don Kreibich, Lou Ienna, Kathy Hartig, Joe Bevacqua; these men and women are raising the issue of pension security. They're calling on a minimum solvency rate for private pension plans out there at 90%—we need to do that; we need to ensure that—and that the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund limit be increased to \$2,500, which is what my friend's bill does. They're calling on employers to communicate actuarial evaluations of their plans annually, and that these are communicated to plan members no later than six months from the period end.

In the province of Ontario, there has been an undue delay in meaningful implementation of some rather basic recommendations with respect to accountability, reporting and transparency. These folks submit that there's no better time than now to address those issues.

I just want to give them a shout-out and thank them for doing this. I hope they're paying attention and seeing that New Democrats take the issue of pension security and income security seriously. With the swift passage of this bill by my friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, we can ensure that there is that security that is so desperately needed.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I would echo the sentiments of my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and, of course, my colleague from Vaughan.

This is a very thoughtful bill that asks us to confront an inequity that doesn't seem to stem from an action taken by any single entity. For example, a generation ago or two generations ago, when you joined your company, they said, "And here are your pension benefits." When did that stop? There was never a piece of legislation that said there are no longer defined benefit pensions or, in many cases, even defined contribution pensions. It just stopped. It was around the same time that we started to see the great aggregation of wealth at the top, and I certainly can remember a lot of the merger and acquisition specialists back in the 1980s cannibalizing the pension fund.

What this asks the province to do is to take a fresh look at the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. The Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund is that pool of money where, if a pension plan can't meet its obligations, the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, which is funded by the contributors—in other words, the intent is not that it be funded by the taxpayer—can provide a top-up from whatever the amount does pay to \$1,000.

One of the things that has to be ironed out in committee is to take the member's aspiration to go from \$1,000 to \$2,500 a month, which while it would clearly be helpful in providing some income security if you're one of those who would be receiving the pension—one of the things we'll study in committee is what would be the cost of doing so? For example, on the province of

Ontario's website, you can find a study that says: "In the absence of any future external funding," and assuming "the present coverage level of \$1,000, an increase in overall assessments"—in other words, the amount that you pay—would be somewhere around 800% "to ensure the sustainability" of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund exists. "If coverage was increased to \$2,500," that would be something like "a 1000% increase in assessments."

I understand where the member is coming from, but the purpose of sending it to committee is to get at some of these things, get them ironed out and say how that increase would be funded.

1520

This is one of the initiatives that dovetails very nicely with the government's own efforts to ensure that particularly young men and women entering the workforce in Ontario at this time can expect, during the course of their lives, to contribute to a pension fund, one that would be portable with them, one to which, ideally, their employer would make a co-contribution, and one that corporate raiders can't loot and leave the person after working in a company, after many years of having contributed to the fund to find out that the fund was sold to pay off creditors, and they're left with nothing. While the member's bill is not about that, this is a bill that certainly is about addressing that and other systemic problems.

A number of years ago, one of the early lone wolves in Canada explaining the shortfall of the manner in which Canadian working men and women would see their pensions funded was former Premier Dalton McGuinty, who used to come in and say, "Mine was the lone voice at the Council of the Federation in talking about this." Over the years he started to get more and more of his fellow Premiers to start asking around in their provinces and to have those other Premiers say, "Yes, my people are talking about it too, and it is something that we're worried about."

Now the ideal way to get at the inadequacies in pension compensation—many of which stem from assumptions made some 60 years ago, at a time when it was expected that men and women would retire at or about the age of 65, and at the time the life expectancy of a retired man would be between five and around eight years, and of a retired woman, seven to 10 or 11 years. The assumptions built into pension plans assumed those life expectancies, but today a man can expect to live a very healthy, productive, fulfilling life deep into his 80s, and a woman very often into her 90s. A young man, a young woman or a baby born today has about a 50-50 chance of living to see the age of 100.

The member has brought up a serious issue, and I do think that this should go to committee to be studied further.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The Ontario provincial government is broke—not just broke, but in debt to the tune of \$267 billion. That's \$20,000 for every man, woman and

child in the province of Ontario. Alarming, almost 10% of Ontario's tax revenue goes toward debt interest payments. That percentage will inevitably increase when interest rates rise, and rise they will. Mortgaging Ontarians' future is irresponsible, not to mention immoral. That is why we cannot pass Bill 174: We simply cannot afford it.

The provincial government does not have the financial capacity to increase spending. Ontarians are tapped out. Both the Liberal Party and NDP fail to understand that governments are no different than households: They cannot spend more than they take in. Deficit spending as a long-term strategy is a policy of failure. The provincial government needs to learn to live within its means, not fund NDP schemes in an effort to avoid an election. This is not a one-time expenditure item. The proposed increase in the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund cap would blow a hole in the provincial government's budget year after year after year.

I understand that the NDP is concerned about employees who lose their pensions and who may not have sufficient funds for their retirements. But there is a way to help employees and their employers. Government should reduce the cost of living for all citizens and provide a competitive business environment for companies to thrive. The first step should be to scrap the Green Energy Act and clean up the numerous bloated agencies that have bungled the energy file, particularly Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One and the Ontario Power Authority: 12,300 public sector employees in the energy sector are on the sunshine list. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent growing these agencies to produce less power. This is not sustainable. We should scrap the \$5.7-billion pre-election spending plan of this wasteful government. We should put an end to corporate welfare.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope the member is going to tie this in to the piece of legislation that is in front of us.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: If the provincial government had followed the recommendations of the Drummond report, we would be on track to eliminating our deficit and controlling our debt. Our massive debt is killing the government's ability to provide the services our people deserve and need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Applause.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, thank you. I only have five minutes.

I just want to congratulate my friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his bill—for introducing this bill—and for having been a champion of pension reform in general for the 65% of the population that doesn't have a pension. It was he who led that fight four years ago, along with our leader, of course. But together, we have led that fight so that those who don't have a pension finally get something.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Show us the pecunia.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Very funny, doc.

If you'll recall, when this member introduced that bill and our leader spoke to it, you had the former finance minister say, "We don't think it's a good idea."

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Don't live in the past.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was just but four years ago—but four years ago—and many of you fine people were there at the time. You all attacked him and his idea, because you said, "No, that's not the way to go." What is the way to go? They said, "The way to go is to go after the feds."

We need a national—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Of course a national plan would have been better, but you guys said no. The provincial plan is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member for Trinity–Spadina to speak through the Chair and ignore the heckling.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Through you, Speaker, of course.

You then said that his idea was a bad one.

Behold, a couple of years later, Kathleen Wynne has a bright idea. She's got a provincial pension plan that she's introducing—no mention of the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek; no mention of the NDP that might have brought the idea forward; no mention of the fact that you fine people criticized it at the time. Now behold, Wynne, the new Premier, has a new idea, borrowed, of course, from the NDP, but we dare not say it publicly.

We get tired of giving you ideas that you then appropriate as your own without giving credit to this side. You understand why we get tired? I just wanted to speak to that briefly as a way of saying that this is a plan that fits this party and fits this member, and this new bill is an extension of that.

So while we want the 65% of the people who have absolutely nothing to have a plan, this speaks to those who are in a plan, God bless. I know the Tories don't like it, because they are the handmaidens of the corporate sector. This is the party that has given \$13 billion away in corporate tax cuts that these fine corporations have socked away, to the tune of \$600 billion that is not being spent.

I understand Tories; I do. They're not concerned about the little guy. They're concerned about the big guy, and they're quite happy to keep giving them tax cuts under the guise that they will create jobs, of which we have seen no evidence, but they have given a whole lot of money away. By the way, the Liberals, not to forgive them, have done the same. They are working hand in hand—not to the same extent, I understand. But for a long, long time, they were kind of happy to cut corporate taxes, too.

On this debate, of course, they differ. I've heard two members support our bill and our member. This is good. But to think that we can't afford pensions while the 1,600 billionaires across the world manage all of us as marion-

ettes, to think that we can't take but a little of that money to serve the general interests and the general public—it's something that I think we could do. It is indeed criminal that we can't help out.

1530

The member from Essex reminded us that 86 families in Canada control more money than 11 million Canadians—86 families. You understand? There's a whole lot of accumulated wealth in the hands of a few, and we can't afford pensions. But we can afford to give them more and more of our taxpayers' money so that they can have a better life—the billionaires; who simply need a little more by taking away from those who don't have anything, from those who don't have a pension; taking that away so that the billionaires could enjoy themselves just a tad more, because they just don't have enough.

I support this bill; it's a good one. Send it to committee.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to respond to my colleague from the NDP on this improvement of the Pension Benefits Act. It's a no-go, unfortunately, and I'm going to say it with three points that I have to make. One is, I'm a retiree from General Motors; I served there 31 years—that pension is in huge trouble. That will mean that my pension won't be paid if they go into corporate bankruptcy. I want to thank Brian Rutherford, who's the president of the group; Mike Powell, who's very expert on this issue; as well as Lynn McCullough and others who have worked very hard to form a group called GENMO. In that group—I've worked with them.

I have two questions on the order paper: that the government of Ontario, under Kathleen Wynne, turned their backs on those retirees—this is what happened. The Minister of Finance: I'm asking him to immediately modify regulation 321/09 to ensure that General Motors Canada Ltd. immediately address and resolve the existing pension shortfall created in 1992, regulation 5.1.

The second question on the order paper is to the Minister of Finance as well: to explain why, in the agreement, the \$4-billion allowance guaranteed to General Motors in 2009 which was to allow GMC to make the pension whole was instead contributed to the prior-year credit balance, thereby immediately robbing the money from the pensioners themselves.

This is a complex issue—that's just one part. How complex is it? Of the 362 recommendations by Don Drummond in his report, there is a whole section about regulating. What he recommended—and I encourage the member to listen:

“Recommendation 19.3: We recommend”—this is Dr. Don Drummond, former Deputy Minister of Finance, federally, and an excellent guy. “We recommend that the province either terminate the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund or explore the possibility of transferring it to a private insurer. The fund is no longer sustainable in its current form as it presents a large fiscal risk for the province in the event of another economic downturn.”

The economic downturn is this: Charles Sousa said yesterday at a meeting that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I ask the member to refer to titles.

Mr. John O'Toole: —the growth in the economy is going to be 2% growth until 2035. We're into a flatline shakedown in the economy. None of this is sustainable. There are a series of recommendations, if people would like to contact me.

I went to a debate the other day on HOOPP, the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan. They're selling the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, but they're really not selling that at all. The Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund is funded by the employer. It's a risk tax on the fund, so it's a tax on employers. That's what it is. There are very few funds that are funded today, completely anyway, to absorb the risk. This guarantee fund is not sustainable. It's said by all the experts. They want to double it. That's why they don't understand how it works.

I'm going to say that there was an article this week in the paper—you should be interested. It said, “Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Posts First Surplus in 10 Years.” It has never been funded. CPP has never been funded, and it isn't funded, and we're going to add more risk to the government? Listen to the experts and do the right thing and learn a little bit more about pensions themselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank all the speakers that spoke on this bill.

The member from Essex kind of hit the mark when he said that 81 people, or groups, control 14 million people, financially, in this province.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Eighty-six, and 11 million people.

Mr. Paul Miller: Right.

The bottom line is that the billionaires get more money, and the people that have worked all their lives for their pensions are in jeopardy. The Conservative Party of Ontario will support the billionaires and the corporations that are, frankly, screwing the working people of this province out of their benefits and pensions they've worked for their whole life. This plan can work if it's funded in different manners, which will be discussed. We will bring forward ways to finance this plan that this group over here would eliminate.

They would eliminate it. They don't show caring for the pensioners of this province; they just say it's another tax, another burden to the finances of the corporations. They don't talk about all the people they worked beside—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: That member worked at GM, worked beside all of these guys who are losing their pensions. I don't know how he can stand up and say, “Well, I'm going to lose my pension.” What he doesn't say is that he's got another job and he's got other income

from another position. These other people in these places don't have any other income. All they've got is old age security and CPP, which comes to about \$1,300 a month. I would challenge any member over there to live on \$1,300 a month. They can't.

What we're trying to do here is supplement the people who are poor and struggling, and a middle class who cannot afford to retire in dignity. I would challenge any member here: Who would want any one of their family members to live in poverty and not dignity in their retirement years after working 40 years? I don't think they would do it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

SAVING APPRENTICES' JOBS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR LA SAUVEGARDE DES EMPLOIS POUR APPRENTIS

Mr. Dunlop moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2009 sur l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario et l'apprentissage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, everyone, who's here today.

I want to read, first of all, the explanatory note:

"Currently, regulations made under the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, provide that statements of membership for members of the college in the journeypersons candidates class expire after one year. The act is amended to provide that such statements of membership expire only upon the issuance of a certificate of qualification to the member.

"The act currently provides that a person who held a valid training agreement registered under the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998, or a valid contract of apprenticeship filed under the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act is deemed to hold a statement of membership as an apprentice under the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, until the expiry date specified in the act, and provides that the person may obtain a statement of membership as an apprentice if he or she files an application and pays a fee by the expiry date. The bill eliminates the expiry date."

Mr. Speaker, we've had this debate in the House a few times. First of all, I'm dealing primarily with the 85,000 apprentices in the province of Ontario who have not signed up for membership in the College of Trades, which is apparently due April 8 of this year. I have received no information from the College of Trades or any communications from the minister's office that that number is decreasing. I only hear that people are signing up every day. Okay?

Second of all, the 4,300 journeyperson candidates in the province of Ontario have until April 8 as well, although just recently, on Monday night or Monday afternoon, a letter came out from the College of Trades saying, "You'll actually now have until July 4, 2014." I think they knew the bill was coming up, and that particular date got rid of a possibility of conversation or discussion when, actually, an election could be taking place, as well. I think the government is being protected by the College of Trades, and the government is protecting the College of Trades as well; there's no question about that.

Why did I bring this up? The apprenticeship sponsors in the province of Ontario—that's the people who sign up the apprentices—got this letter from Mr. Duguid's office, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, dated February 21, 2014, from the five directors in the province: Robert Dupuis, Mary Joe Freire, June Fox-Casey, Sheree Mahood and Teresa Damaso. This is what they received. It sparked turmoil in the industry. I'll read the main section of it here:

"Apprentices who had a registered training agreement prior to April 8, 2013, automatically became members of the college's apprentices class for one year without application or payment of the college's membership fee. That period will be ending on April 8, 2014.

1540

"If you have apprentices in this situation"—I understand that there are 4,300 journeyperson candidates and up to 10,000 apprentices—"please encourage them to submit their application form and pay their membership fee to the college in order to keep their membership active and their training agreement(s) registered so you can continue to train and work with them as apprentices. If your apprentices fail to renew their membership by April 8, 2014, their college membership will expire and their registered training agreement will be cancelled. This means you will no longer be able to train them as apprentices and they will no longer be able to work in any compulsory aspect of their trade."

That's what came out from the minister's staff in the province of Ontario. That means to me that these people are going to lose their jobs. That's what I get out of it. Maybe there's another letter I didn't see. All the people I work with, some of the people in the Stop the Trades Tax campaign—there are over 8,600 employers now, representing about, and I forget the exact number, 300,000 tradespeople. I don't think they've seen anything to say that would change, either. That's the gist of the bill.

Just recently, and I think it's because we brought this bill out, one of the apprenticeship candidates that we had in the House, a young lady by the name of Kailin Ambrose, got this letter this week on Monday. It basically said, "Now you've got until July 4, 2014, and you will have to pass it by that date." It's a one-time shot only. You don't have to write it by April 8. You have to write it by July 4, but you're out of luck if you don't get it. That's what this letter says.

What I'm doing with this bill, ladies and gentlemen, is that I wish I could get the support of the House. I want

this expiry date removed. I've been all over Ontario with this issue. The College of Trades: When they brought it in, they thought it was probably a good idea. I think it's a disaster. This type of nonsense is going on.

We're talking about people that are working in jobs, and they are doing a good job in that particular trade they're in. I think of young Kailin, who was here. I've been out to see her hairdressing salon. She has a lot of clients. She does excellent work. She just can't pass that final test. She needs 70%. She's getting 65%, 67%. It has cost her over \$1,000 so far in fees. She just can't pass it. But she's terrified—now it's on July 4—that they're going to have to let her go because apparently, even the employers could be subjected to fines if they keep her on. That's wrong. That's not the Ontario I grew up in. Come on. What are we? This is not Nicaragua or some bloody place. This is Ontario, where we want people to work. And there's a young lady who's trying to raise her little boy. They're going to put her out of work with this crazy nonsense. What kind of an idiot would think of writing that letter? That's what I say. And it's wrong. It's plain wrong that we allow this kind of nonsense to carry on. That's why the Stop the Trades Tax campaign was started. It has now expanded to all of the hairdressers across Ontario. They now have Cut the Salon Tax.

Every once in a while, they'll find somebody who will speak up for the Ontario College of Trades, and they send a letter in. You know what happens then? The College of Trades tweets it out to everybody. They think everybody loves it. But who are these people who like the College of Trades? I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it's likely the people that are earning money from it. Guess what? We've got a sunshine list at the Ontario College of Trades starting at \$180,000 for the CEO. And the enforcement cop—I think he's actually a guy that's probably double-dipping: Robert Onyschuk. It looks like he's at \$137,000.

Now little Kailin, who's worried about her job, if she does work past July 4 and she hasn't written that exam—Bob Onyschuk and his gang, these thugs from the enforcement division, are going to come in and make sure they get her out of that trade. They actually had people from MTCU drop in to see her who said, "You should have picked another career."

Here's what's wrong. Remember all the years when—I need some water. I'm drying up here. Sorry. I get pretty emotional about this subject. Remember when we were directed to go into the trades or into sciences or maths or whatever it was? A lot of people actually did that, and they got directed into those particular trades. But now, in education, everybody passes. You go to graduation, and everybody gets a scroll, or they get a diploma. But there are people who have trouble writing an exam. They actually have trouble writing that exam. They freeze on it. They may have learning skills problems, but why should they be put out of a job? There's got to be a better way than writing this threatening letter saying that on July 4 you're going to be out of work.

I've got a lot of supporters here today. These folks in the gallery here are representing—I can't remember

everybody's name exactly—somewhere around 350,000 people. The fact of the matter is, the people now that are joining the Cut the Salon Tax campaign and the Stop the Trade Tax campaign—it's growing, it's mushrooming in a huge way. If I can find my note here, I probably have—I never made a regular speech up. But the reality is—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speak from your heart, Garf.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Pardon me? No, I have all the names. Quite frankly, we've got groups like the Ontario sewer and water main contractors, the Ontario Electrical League. We have First Choice Haircutters. We have Magicuts. We have LIUNA, the biggest construction trade union in Canada. They've now joined the Stop the Trades Tax campaign. These people are serious. They see jobs being lost. I talked to people in Minister Kenney's office, including in a meeting he was at, and they said, "Why is Ontario the only province in Canada that's going the opposite way?" Everyone else is trying to create jobs and making the skilled trades a priority. What are we doing? We're building a barrier in front of them.

So what's got to happen—you folks all know how I stand on this; I've been fairly outspoken on it. I think the minister knows. I want the College of Trades abolished; it's that simple. I have never seen anything so pathetic. Even the Ontario Chamber of Commerce says, "You know what? Let's tinker with it a little bit, see if we can fix it. But you know what? If you can't fix it, abolish it." We're hearing that over and over again, everywhere we go.

My phone never quits ringing. I spend hours every day on the phone as critic for skilled trades and apprenticeship reform. I'm doing events and, second of all, going out trying to calm people down. People are picking up the phone; they're just screaming at me because I'm a politician. I said, "Look, I'm trying to help you, buddy." They're going into service centres and to automotive dealerships. They're going into hairdressing salons, into barbers' places. And they're not even politically smart. They go in there and they've got these fancy uniforms on and a brand new car—these enforcement guys—and what they're saying is. "Where is your licence? I want to see it on the wall."

What the heck is going on here? Speaker, what is going on that we have to put up with this kind of nonsense? Again, we are Ontario. We are supposed to be the engine that drives the Canadian economy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: So they're not supposed to have licences? Come on, can you imagine?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: And the minister—I hear he's starting to chirp already, but the reality is, he's got nothing to come back with. Every question I've ever asked him had the same answer. He refers to something: "The decision's made at the Albany Club." That's the kind of thing he says. What's he talking about? I don't even go to the Albany Club. The reality is, over and over and over again we will say—

Mr. Paul Miller: You've been there.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I sure hope the NDP know where you stand on this. I know you voted against my

opposition day motion last year. I hope you're wise enough to start supporting what I'm trying to say here. You've got to have this expiry date removed. This is dangerous for Ontario.

Finally, as we wind down here, the other thing the College of Trades is doing in a very sneaky way is they're trying to compulsorily certify trades—the trade of carpentry. I don't know how dumb you would have to be to approve compulsory certification of carpentry. It will simply cripple the construction industry in the province of Ontario. No one will know where to take an apprenticeship because the ratios are already out of whack. They're at 3 to 1 for carpentry. So they will completely wreck it. I know people all over Ontario that are going to leave Ontario with their manufacturing. They'll leave with their manufacturing and their building because of this idiotic Ontario College of Trades. Let's scrap it and let's get rid of this expiry date.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill. Despite the member's passion on this issue, I have so many problems with what he has said. At the same time, I do understand some of the aspects of what he's talking about. When he talks about compulsory certification, yes, there are issues there. When he's talking about ratios for the trades, or specifically for carpentry, he says the ratios are out of whack—according to him, a politician deciding, dictating what he thinks, as an individual, the ratio should be. So that very basic premise in what he has said, that he dictates, he deems those ratios out of whack, compromises his entire argument on the College of Trades. I initially, from the outset, supported the concept of the College of Trades—

Interjections.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I would just remind members, when the last speaker spoke, the House was completely silent. I would ask you to give this speaker the same attention.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Good speech.

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

The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to tame it down a little bit and try to bring everybody a little more into a level of civility.

One of the rationales behind the College of Trades was to take the decision-making process out of the ministry, out of the bureaucracy and out of the realm of politics. I wholeheartedly endorsed that concept because of the comments of the originator of the bill, just on that basic premise. The decision around ratios should be industry- and worker-driven. They should decide what market demands are, based on data, real scientific data, not what an individual member from an individual riding might think they need or what his or her stakeholders need. I understand that principle. It safeguards safety; it

assures us that we have a good supply of apprentices entering into those various labour markets. I think, again, it depoliticizes it. I appreciate that and understand that.

Unfortunately, the member, in his previous incarnation around reforms to the College of Trades, talked about blowing it up, ending it completely. So what is the alternative? He wants to bring it back into the realm of politics and bring it back into the realm of the ministerial purview rather than having industry drive the decisions around it. Now, who those industry people are and if they have biases is up for debate. I agree that we need to have a lot more oversight on what is happening at the college, but to blow it up offers us no assurance that anything will get better.

He spoke about the previous incarnation of his bill, or reforms to the college. It was to go to a one-to-one ratio across the board for all trades, no matter what sector. I'm telling you that would hurt workers. You're going to compromise health and safety.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Tell that to Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe North, come to order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You know what else you're going to do? You're going to put journeypeople out of work because those folks who have been in the field for 30 years, 20 years or more, are going to have to be competing for their jobs on the job, in the field, with apprentices. It's a source of cheap labour. I know where that's coming from, from the speaker; it's coming from the merit shops and the claques that are absolutely anti-union.

I'll say another thing that degrades his argument on the College of Trades and really pushes the Conservatives and the opposition aside in terms of their legitimacy on it, because we know ultimately what they would do when it comes to skilled labour and trades in general in this province. They would dismantle unions and collective bargaining wholeheartedly with right-to-work provisions. It dilutes any of their rationale. It makes them dislocated with the logic. New Democrats—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: What's your plan? Do you have a plan?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What is our plan? Our plan is to take a reasonable approach, knowing that there are problems. There are problems inherent in the College of Trades that need to be addressed immediately. It's okay to take a balanced approach. There are a lot of things that need work. There are a lot of things in this province that need work and need reform, and we should be constantly reviewing our government agencies and policies that come before the House to ensure that we're doing the best job to make those work efficiently. But we shouldn't take on ideological pursuits, as the member is doing, to be able to appease and appeal to his core constituency, which are mega-multinationals that want cheap labour.

When we talk about small business people who are in the hairdressing sector, that's where New Democrats take a rational approach. We say, "Yeah, you know what? You know what? We understand"—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The member thinks it's a joke.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No, I think you're a joke.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. The member for Simcoe North, this is your bill. You've moved it, you've spoken—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pretty passionate, sir.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You had the respect of the House and I can understand you being very passionate, but I would expect you to keep order.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Okay. I'll do my best.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex, continue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thought the member was an honourable member, but indeed he has proven not to be.

Speaker, I can tell you that we understand where there are areas that need reform. We understand that imposing a fee on a hairdresser who makes \$30,000 a year should not be at the same level as a journeyman electrician who makes in excess of \$130,000 or \$140,000 a year. That's a reasonable, rational, balanced approach. That shouldn't constitute a reason to blow up the entire system of regulatory reform, of advancing the trades in the province of Ontario. That shouldn't be. That should be something that we in this House feel we have the ability, as competent members, to express a rational proposal to fix. I do that to the minister right now; I hope, as I'm speaking to him, that he acknowledges that that is an issue that should be and can be addressed. I hope he does. I think we can do that, but when we take such an erratic, radical approach as the member has, he loses all legitimacy on this argument completely. Now he speaks about—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Can he speak to the bill, Speaker?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm speaking directly to the bill. He might be offended that I'm talking about how irrational his logic is on it, but when he speaks about some of the stakeholders that have expressed concern, I can tell you, as a member of LIUNA—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order, Speaker.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: This bill is the Saving Apprentices' Jobs Act, about the expiry date and abolishing it. It would be nice if the member got back on track.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for the point of order. I'm listening very carefully.

The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I've learned that when you get too underneath their skin, that's the tactic that they approve, so I know that I'm on the right subject here.

As a LIUNA member, I understand exactly that this is turning out to be an opportunity for other unions to embark on a jurisdictional dispute, and I'm very deeply concerned about it. I've expressed my concerns to the minister that this is something that is evolving and we have to get on top of that issue immediately. It's one of the largest problems with the college and something that could spiral out of control, but it's not something that I

feel is insurmountable. Again, as competent, conscientious members of this House, we have to do our due diligence and make those problems clear and find out solutions to address them.

One would be, and I propose to the minister, that the enforcement agents under the College of Trades should be actually the labour folks.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Labour folks.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: They should be through the Ministry of Labour rather than through the College of Trades. These are educated people in terms of the regulations and also educated under collective agreements that should be respected, long-standing collective agreements that deal with various jurisdictions.

Again, I'm passionate about it because I know the ramifications—economic, safety, regulatory and otherwise—of the proposal from the member. Blowing it up completely and putting it back into the purview of the ministry is not an option that should happen. We need to be modern in our approach to apprenticeship programs. Again, to roll the clock back and to throw any regulation out the window or any reform or any promotion of the trades, I think, is disastrous. Again, I am pleased to not support the bill from the member.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Essex for what was a very informed intervention in this debate. The members opposite laugh because he disagrees with them. He actually stands up for skilled tradespeople each and every day in this Legislature, and he doesn't do it to try to get cheap publicity. He does it because he's trying to find solutions, because this is a very, very important sector in our economy. It's a very important sector for our young people moving forward in our dramatically changing economy. It's something that I know the member opposite and all members on this side of the House feel very strongly about.

I think the member opposite, with this bill—it's just another example of the member moving forward to spread what I would call incorrect information and use that to try to destabilize what apprentices are going through in this province, destabilize the skilled trades at a time when we're trying to build them up. I'm pleased to have the support of the member opposite because this is one of those things we do need to work together on. It shouldn't be a partisan issue. Unfortunately, the folks in the official opposition are making it a partisan issue. So if we have to respond in a partisan way, it's with regret, but I think we need to do that. The fact of the matter is, this member is manufacturing a false crisis around the routine deadline for apprentices to register in the College of Trades. He wrongly and incorrectly says, and has been saying, that 85,000 apprentices are going to be out of work as of April 8. Mr. Speaker, that is just utterly complete nonsense. That simply is not what's going to happen, and he knows that. All he has to do to find out what's going to happen is call Mr. Tsubouchi, who is the head of the College of Trades. He would totally assure

the member that that is not the approach that's going to be taken—not at all, Mr. Speaker.

1600

In essence, what his bill does is it guts the revenues required to keep the College of Trades going. At the end of his speech, he made it very clear what his goal is: to gut the College of Trades. The skilled trades have come too far in the last year with the College of Trades to gut it now and go back to the old days that he makes fun of, when decisions at Queen's Park used to be made in the backrooms—yes, I refer to the smoky backrooms of the Albany Club, because we know that in the days when his government was in office, that's how those decisions were being made.

None of us are completely clean on that because in the last 40 years those decisions were made here at Queen's Park, rather than being made by those people who are in the skill trades themselves, those people who really know the skilled trades.

I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, some of us in this room have a little more knowledge than others of the skilled trades. There are members in this room who have been members of the skilled trades—one is waving at me right now—but the fact of the matter is nobody knows more about the skilled trades than skilled tradespeople themselves. It's time for that member to recognize that and stop trying to steal control of those very important decisions that affect the lives of people in the skilled trades and bring it back into the realm of politicians.

Mr. Speaker, all three parties are guilty of this. We did a lousy job through the years of regulating this industry—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You did.

Hon. Brad Duguid: He says that we did. Let's compare records, because the College of Trades, in the short time that they have been in place—just about a year now—within the first six months or so, they reviewed every apprenticeship ratio in this province. Let's think of what the member's party did when they were in office: They reviewed zero apprenticeship ratios—zero. They did nothing. How many ratios did they reduce when they were in office? Well, the same number: zero. The NDP at least reduced one. Since we've been in office, we reduced seven. The College of Trades has reduced 14. That's more than all three parties in this Legislature combined have done, likely, in the last 40 years.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: That's progress.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I would say they're making progress. I would say they are doing a better job than what we can do here at Queen's Park. I think making those decisions in the light of the public forums that they participate in, with bodies that are actually made up of people from the skilled trades, is a heck of a lot more effective than what the member wants to do, which is to go back to the old days.

I think the fact is that what this bill does is it guts the revenues that keep the College of Trades going. It puts an end to the dream of skilled tradespeople to be able to govern themselves. I don't understand for the life of me

why this member and his party are so against skilled tradespeople having that right to self-govern.

There are 44 other regulatory bodies across this province that govern 44 other professions in this province. They're not going after the teachers—although they often do in other ways. They're not going after social workers, who have their own body. They're not going after the lawyers or the doctors or the nurses or any of the others. They're just going after the skilled tradespeople. Why is that? I have to ask, Mr. Speaker, is it that they think skilled tradespeople just aren't up to the job of governing themselves? Do they think they don't have the capacity to make these decisions regarding their trades? Because it's really bizarre that they don't go after the other regulatory bodies.

They make up all this stuff about membership fees, calling it all kinds of things that it's not, but yet they think it's okay for these other regulatory bodies to have membership fees.

Self-governance is something that, you would think, when you look at the approach that this member has taken—if the College of Trades were to be abolished, all those functions would now have to come back into government. This member's idea is to start a whole brand new ministry to deal with those issues. You know what I call that? I call that tax and spend, because he's going to have to go back to the taxpayers to find money to pay for that. I call that big government. Not that there are any pure socialists in this Legislature anymore, but I would expect that from a socialist MPP. I sure as heck wouldn't be expecting that from a PC member. I can tell you that if you talk to some of your colleagues outside this Legislature who worked in previous governments that were PC governments, if they took a look at what you're trying to do, I think they'd be shaking their heads. In fact, I can tell you they are shaking their heads right now. Their policy makes no sense whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on as well to talk about a few other things. I'm going to leave time for my colleague, because we're running out of time too quickly here.

As of April 8—let's be very, very clear; the College of Trades has been very, very clear—apprentices will not be kicked off job sites. They will be encouraged, Mr. Speaker. We'll work with them and they'll work with employers to make sure they get up to compliance so they can be full-fledged members of the College of Trades, a body that's there to protect them, a body that's there to preserve their protection against the underground economy, a body that's there to protect consumers and a body that's there to provide them with a voice in their own profession, something they deserve, something I find disgraceful that the member opposite thinks they're not capable of doing.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to rise and stand here today and talk about Bill 169, the Saving Apprentices' Jobs Act, introduced by my colleague from

Simcoe North. But before I get started, I want to congratulate him. This member has worked so hard over the last couple of years. He has reached out to so many communities and so many tradespeople. The passion that you're feeling and hearing today in this House is very, very real, because he has listened to the real-life stories. He understands how the College of Trades and the non-sense and layers of bureaucracy are going to negatively impact so many different trades across this province. To the member for Simcoe North I say thank you and don't stop; we're going to see this through to the end.

First of all, we all know why this bill has been introduced: We need to abolish these deadlines in terms of making people pay these fees. I find it interesting that originally the deadline was April 8. Now the government, the College of Trades—whoever—has extended it to July 4. What's July 4, Mr. Speaker? That's Independence Day. Think about the rich irony here: As people are told to conform and comply—I believe the minister's exact words were “get up to compliance”—it's anything but independence.

I think we need to get back to getting out of the way of business doing what they do best, be it an electrician, be it a carpenter, be it a person on a construction site or a hairdresser, for goodness' sake. We need to think about this through and through. We have to think about how this government is not connecting the dots.

They say they're all about finding jobs for our young people. Mr. Speaker, I want to revisit the fact that last year Ontario's youth unemployment rate was 17.1%. The inability of this minister and this Liberal government to connect the dots and understand the implications of their actions is disturbing. It's important to think about who we're talking about here: saving apprentices' jobs. Generally speaking, the people who would lose jobs because of the College of Trades and the deadlines are our young people, and I want to talk about them for a moment or two.

I think about Jarris Ireland from Teeswater, Ontario. He's a wonderful, community-minded person who was raised by parents who believe in giving back. He's getting married in December. But guess what? Guess where he has found a job? North of Fort McMurray. He's two weeks in Alberta, one week home. I think about fast-forwarding to when he gets married. That's quite a newlywed life he's going to be leading: two weeks in Alberta, one week at home. This is not the Ontario I want to see for our young people.

We are in a desperate shortage of skilled tradespeople. I think about the folks who worked on our house when we renovated it. We have a contractor whose son is very, very skilled in fine carpentry work, and I think about how he would like to share his trade with young people who are coming into the business. But, for goodness' sake, our apprenticeship approach in Ontario under this Liberal government is all wrong, and we need to think about what we need to be doing to get people back to work.

1610

The legislation put forward by my colleague solves some of this problem. It takes some deadlines, some

aspects of red tape, if you will, out of the way. We need good, sensible legislation, and I think every member in this House should be supporting the member from Simcoe North.

In closing, I'm just amazed at the costs this Liberal government is willing to impose on all of our small businesses and every aspect of our population, if you will, in terms of trying to pay their way for all their mistakes. The cost of power has hit hard, the increase in the cost of waste management has hit hard, the new WSIB—they just get layered onward and onward. You know what? We have to do better, and we can do better by following the lead from my colleague in Simcoe North and, first of all, abolishing the deadlines—and when we have the honour of forming government under the leadership of Tim Hudak, we'll abolish the College of Trades as well.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will not be supporting Bill 169, and I have to say, the odium that has been expressed by the member from Simcoe North is, to me, unpleasant, and I believe it's unbecoming of this member; I really do. I understand the strong feelings he has, but the language, in my view, is unpleasant and unbecoming.

When he refers to inspectors as “thugs,” I understand what he's saying, but I just think that he should find an appropriate language to deal with his disagreement. This is strong stuff. People are doing their jobs. He might disagree with that, but to refer to them as “thugs” is simply inappropriate.

His bill essentially removes the requirement that apprentices become fee-paying members of the College of Trades. This bill is connected to their desire to get rid of the College of Trades. The member from Simcoe North has spoken to that. All of the party members speak to this on a regular basis, and we know where they're coming from.

I have to say, as a member who was sitting on those committees when we were dealing with this, that the government is simply not very good at doing this job. It was very clear, when we were doing that, that the ministry of post-secondary education was simply not the place to handle this and that a College of Trades, in my mind, was the better place to deal with the trades. Are you going to have problems? Inevitably. Are some problems solvable? I think they are.

But what I think it does—which I believe is very important—is play a role in enforcing trade standards for consumers, and it will act as a disciplinary body for the tradespeople who have consistently violated industry standards. And, in addition, consumers will be able to lodge a complaint with the college if they feel work done for them did not meet acceptable standards.

I've had to deal with a problem. I had Homeservice Club of Ontario come to do a job at our house. I'm telling you it was a disaster. We paid \$17,000, and it was a disaster. I complained to them. I sent them a letter. I even told them who I was. It had no effect whatsoever. They didn't even reply.

They in fact sent somebody to the house. The person who went to do the investigation agreed that the work that was done was not appropriate to the standards. I wrote them a letter asking, "Where are we with this?" They haven't even replied.

Where do you go? Where does a consumer go? This College of Trades would allow them to do that.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Now, should we look at, member from Simcoe North—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Should we review this in a way that—I think we can be reasonable. I think the College of Trades should look upon hairdressers a little differently than many others. Most of these folks who work in this trade are women, and they have skill, no doubt. Is that one group that we might look at differently than the rest of the trades? I would argue, from a personal point of view, yes. Are the fees, in some cases, for some people, too high? I would say yes. Should we be looking at some of these things? I argue with the minister—who is inattentive at the moment—that they should be looking at these matters. But I believe we're on the right track.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: Before I begin my remarks about Bill 169, I want to acknowledge the visitors who are here from the skilled trades to witness today's debate on the member opposite's Bill 169.

Let me begin by sharing with the members here the history of apprenticeship. It started back in the 1920s, when Ontario became the first province in Canada to introduce a statutory-based apprenticeship program. In the same vein, our province is now leading the way when it became the first jurisdiction in North America to have a College of Trades.

In 1944, by request of management and labour representatives, the automotive repair industry asked for compulsory certification when it came to motor vehicle repair. Then, in 1958, then-Premier Leslie Frost required compulsory certification for those in the trade of hairdresser. Then, in 1963, then-Premier John Robarts required compulsory certification for the trade of barber. So there has been a long-standing history that progressive Premiers have created some trade requirements and certification.

When the member opposite from Simcoe North continuously attacks the College of Trades this afternoon, I want to remind him that the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, the member from Thornhill, the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, the member from Northumberland-Quinte West, the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, the member from Whitby-Oshawa and the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock were all previously members of a professional regulatory body. No professional regulatory body can say that a membership fee is a tax. Let that be on the table, because that kind of language is inflammatory. It's pretty unacceptable.

I want to also share that Mr. Bill Nicholls, president of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, said, "Calling a membership fee a 'tax grab' is intentionally misleading: membership fees will apply to members of the college, not taxpayers."

When the member from Simcoe North speaks about this bill, I get his passion and his commitment to ensuring that the College of Trades is fair and, as well, is supporting the community. Let me also remind the member that all self-regulating bodies are there to protect the public.

As a member of the College of Nurses for almost 30 years, I would like to believe that the College of Nurses' first and utmost responsibility is to ensure that the health care being delivered in this province is safe and that the consumer—in this case, the patient and the family—has been protected. For the member to say that the essence of the College of Trades' membership fee is a tax is absolutely not correct, so I want to remind him as well.

I want to also acknowledge the minister's comment earlier. The member opposite is trying to create a crisis. We know what happened when the previous Conservative government tried to create a crisis when it comes to public education. Fear-mongering is not the right way to do it. If you want to debate an issue based on facts, I'm happy to do that.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and add to this lively debate on Bill 169, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. Before I begin my remarks, I just want to take a moment to thank our member from Simcoe North for his tireless efforts to help the workers who are being exploited by this new bureaucracy, the Ontario College of Trades.

1620

This bill is an example of trying to make a minority government work, and I applaud the member for that. Our preference would be to scrap the College of Trades altogether. I know I have had many constituents come to me, asking me, almost pleading with me, to see it scrapped. I have sat in on very lively, heated meetings where these tradespeople are extremely upset at what the College of Trades is imposing upon them.

The member from Simcoe North has introduced this bill to save the jobs of tens of thousands of workers here in the province of Ontario. The College of Trades, in a nutshell, demands that workers from across the province pay up to the provincial government, or else they will no longer be certified to do the job they're already doing. It doesn't matter if you're a barber who has been working for decades, or a baker or a carpenter. You have to pay up.

Section 90 of the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act states that all apprentices in Ontario who signed an agreement prior to the college's inception would be deemed members of the college for one year. That deadline is fast approaching, and there are still an estimated 85,000 apprentices who need to renew their memberships. If the deadline passes and the apprentices have not paid their membership fees, this will have disastrous consequences.

Clive Thurston, President of the Ontario General Contractors Association, said in a press release: “Our members are being notified by the college to stop training their apprentices on April 8. They have a mandate to promote the trades; instead, they are destroying them.”

These apprentices are honest, hard-working people who are simply trying to make a living and to do some valuable work in their communities. They do not take kindly to the government dipping into their wallets for a little more cash, and they certainly don’t appreciate being told that they’re working illegally.

Let’s get this bill past second reading today. If they want to put it in a committee and they want to make amendments to it, let’s make it happen. Right now, the way this bill is, it’s going to cost the residents, people who want to do home renovations, where they would just perhaps hire a handyperson to come and do the work—now, under this, they would have to hire a carpenter, an electrician, a drywaller, a painter, a floor installer. It goes on and on and on. That’s going to cost Ontario taxpayers, the residents of this great province, a lot more money.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to the passing of this bill.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I’m pleased to stand here today to commend the member from Simcoe North on his leadership and support for the hard-working tradespeople of our province.

The College of Trades is nothing more than another costly layer of bureaucracy put in place by this Liberal government as a reward for generous Liberal donations. In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I’d ask the member to withdraw. It’s an insinuation.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I withdraw. Speaker, my riding—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I asked you to withdraw.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I did.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I didn’t hear you.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I withdraw.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, businesses are struggling to survive the heavy burden of obscene electricity rates, high payroll and property taxes.

Chris the Barber, a small business in Glen Walter, took up the fight on what is just another excessive tax increase. He saw his trade licensing fee go from \$20 to over \$135 per year, a 600% increase. What does that get for him? Nothing—nothing but inspectors coming in, harassing and threatening to close his small business, a long-standing, popular barbershop that was started by his father, Gilles, decades ago.

But there’s more to the story. When Chris took up the fight against the unreasonable tax increase, he was visited

by a number of thugs. They told him that they didn’t want to see him in the newspapers anymore, or else.

So let’s take a minute and just think about this serious act of intimidation. Why would members of a large provincial union show up to threaten a small one-person business? What’s in it for them? What benefits would this Liberal government agency provide a union, for them to send in the goons? It’s amazing this would happen in today’s Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Continue.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I’m wondering what’s in it for them. What benefits would this Liberal government agency provide such a union for them to send in the goons? It’s amazing that this would happen in Ontario.

Then there’s Earl Leger in my riding, a hard-working tradesman who was pleased to see his son, Devon, follow in his footsteps and join the skilled trades as an apprentice. Despite the lack of skilled jobs in the province, Devon found employment in Kingston after a long job hunt. However, Devon will lose his job for no other reason than this government’s job-killing policies. The College of Trades is challenging the validity of regular trade licences. Even though his employer is happy with Devon’s job performance, they will be forced to terminate him due to the College of Trades job-killing regulations.

I’ll leave some time for my colleagues.

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

Mr. John O’Toole: I just want to put on the record, first of all, that the member for Simcoe North has worked hard on this. He’s a skilled tradesperson. He knows of what he speaks. He’s trying to protect the jobs that he knows built this province.

I first heard about this from my barber quite a few months ago, and I wrote to the ministry. I have still had no response to it. My barber has been barbering for 30 years, and he was told he had to get the certificate. In the same barbershop, Dave Bryant’s daughter actually cuts hair. She’s a hairdresser as well. He cannot and does not intend to do anything more than give you a decent haircut. Mine is perfect, for example. I still have hair, which is a good thing. He does not do hairdressing, but he does shave customers occasionally, if asked. But his daughter can do all the other things.

This is an example of a father and a daughter creating their own jobs, and you’re threatening them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There’s a lot of folks standing around having conversations. I’d ask you to take them outside.

The member for Simcoe North, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I’d like to thank the member from Essex, the minister and the members from Huron–Bruce, Trinity–Spadina, Scarborough–Agincourt, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Durham for their feedback. In the end, I guess I’m happy that the third

party, the farm club of the Liberals, is actually supporting them on this.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: How much more pathetic could it be than some of the comments we heard?

The minister never did say how many apprentices are going to lose their jobs, and he will not explain the letter. Why did the ministry send the letter out to all the employers? Why would they do that? Did they just do it as a joke? Have they got nothing better to do than send out threatening letters to employers? He never explained that. He said, "Call Dave Tsubouchi." He knows a lot about all the details, but he knows nothing about this. Shame on you for that little, stupid comment.

I am a tradesperson. I know a little bit about this. I've worked with tradespeople for 20 years of my life. I know there's not a lot of you in this House; I know that's the case. But I am passionate about this. I've been around. I've been at about 150 locations. I've actually put two documents out: this one to the Canadian Contractors Association—I'll give one to the minister if he wants to read it sometime; he may learn something from it—and this one on all the tradespeople. This one abolishes the College of Trades; they both do.

We all know it came as a result of the Working Families coalition. Let's get to the point here: That's what it's all about. It's payback time. They want it to go through.

But it's not payback time with Tim Hudak and the PC caucus.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Withdraw.

It's not payback time for us. But I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker: When we get elected, we will abolish the Ontario College of Trades.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

1630

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR
ADVERTISING ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ
DES ORGANISMES
DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 1, standing in the name of Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 134, An Act respecting broader public sector advertising.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a bunch of noes.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j)—Mr. Bisson?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I refer the matter to the regulations and private bills committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bisson wishes it to be referred to the regulations and private bills committee. Agreed? Agreed.

PENSION BENEFITS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 174, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act.

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 to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—Mr. Miller?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to refer it to the committee on finance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the committee on finance. Agreed? Agreed.

SAVING APPRENTICES' JOBS ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 POUR LA SAUVEGARDE
DES EMPLOIS POUR APPRENTIS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Dunlop has moved second reading of Bill 169, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009.

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 to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1632 to 1637.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask all members to take their seats.

Mr. Dunlop has moved second reading of Bill 169, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack

Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Scott, Laurie

Dunlop, Garfield	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	Miller, Norm	Yakubuski, John
Holyday, Douglas C.	Milligan, Rob E.	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fife, Catherine	Moridi, Reza
Bisson, Gilles	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Forster, Cindy	Natyshak, Taras
Campbell, Sarah	Gates, Wayne	Prue, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hatfield, Percy	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Hoskins, Eric	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzie	Sattler, Peggy
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Singh, Jagmeet
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Vanthof, John
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Mantha, Michael	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Marchese, Rosario	
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 33; the nays are 46.

1640

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

Second reading negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

VOLUNTARY BLOOD DONATIONS ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LE DON DE SANG VOLONTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to ensure that blood and blood constituents are donated freely / Projet de loi 178, Loi visant à assurer la gratuité du don de sang et de composants sanguins.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): When this item was last debated, the member for Nickel Belt had the floor, with six minutes and 59 seconds remaining.

Further debate? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Ms. Cindy Forster: A point of order, Speaker.

Interjections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, I'd like to introduce a co-op student who is volunteering in my office. She's here today in the members' gallery. Her name is Danielle Penney. She's actually from the WillowWood School, and she's from the Willowdale riding. I'd like to welcome her to Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Now we'll recognize the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to speak in favour of this particular legislation, but there are a few things that I'd like to put on the record.

First of all, as we all know, the government has been faced with this situation since about November 2012. I guess the question that we all have to ask ourselves is, why has the government waited until now to bring legislation forward to deal with this and to put themselves into this somewhat of a bind of having to pass legislation before the summer?

I just want to say at the outset that we will support this legislation and look forward for it to be out of second reading and into committee and back for a vote sometime this spring. But I think it's important—we've only had about an hour and a bit of debate—that we have an opportunity, as all members in this House do, to be able to put a couple of things on the record.

Let's take a look at where we're at. The rules currently don't have an explicit omission as to allowing people to pay for blood plasma products. That's something that has existed for a long time. It has never really been an issue, because of the way our blood collection system in this country and in this province has been run over the years.

But back a few years ago, a company made an application in order to be able to start blood plasma clinics in Toronto—two, specifically—and, in their application, said that they wanted to pay people \$20 per donation when they're donating blood. Obviously, that's something that is troubling, because within our system, as we understand it in Canada, we have never accepted that you pay somebody for donating blood. There are all kinds of reasons why, and I'll let other people speak to that.

Here we were in November 2012, faced with this particular situation. The government, for whatever reason, did not introduce a bill in this House. I know that our colleague, the critic for health, the member from Nickel Belt, had raised on a number of occasions, both by way of questions in the House and discussions that she had with the minister, why it was that the government needed to do this, and certainly had indicated the support of our party, the New Democratic Party of Ontario, in moving forward in order to ban this by putting in an explicit restriction for the payment for blood when it comes to donations in the province of Ontario.

But for whatever reason, the government didn't do so and sort of dragged its feet until the last hour. It really makes you wonder what the government was up to. Were they thinking that maybe this is a good idea? Was it a question that they couldn't get their act together? Was it a question that the minister had too many things on her plate? You pick, but for whatever reason, we find ourselves in this particular situation. Clearly, there needs to be something done in order to make sure that should these clinics try to collect money for the collection of blood, they not be allowed to do so.

I wanted to speak to this, also, from the perspective of safety because there has been, as we all know, a huge change to our blood collection system as a result of some things that have happened in the past.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I would ask you guys to take it outside if you are going to carry on like that.

The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker.

As I was saying, we have undergone a humongous change within our country in regards to our blood product services, when it comes to the collection of blood products in this country, because of a tragedy that happened some years ago. I wanted to take an opportunity to speak to that particular part of it because I think in all of our constituencies we've dealt with people who got tainted blood and unfortunately are very sick today—and a number of them are no longer here.

I can think of a number of constituents I had to deal with. Isidore Kingsbury is an example of one who got tainted blood some years ago as a result of a condition that he had where he was in need of blood. Unfortunately, he got a disease from the donated blood that eventually led to his early death. I can tell you, from the perspective of the family and friends of this particular gentleman, it was quite a trying thing. Imagine finding yourself in a position where you go into the hospital for something that's routine, you get some blood and the next thing you know you've got a life-threatening disease as a result of that particular infusion. He, along with many other Canadians, struggled for a long time for it at least to be recognized that it was as a result of the tainted blood that they got those diseases, and that some form of compensation be paid.

Unfortunately, a lot of the victims who were affected by that were never properly compensated. Now they or their families are having to live with the consequence of that, because in many cases these were hard-working individuals in our communities who had good jobs, who were making a living. They were paying their bills. They were raising their families and doing the things that are all part of life. All of a sudden, because of their illness, they were not able to work anymore, and were really thrown into a really bad financial situation as a result of contracting the disease. I still deal with, today, people in my constituency who have been affected by that particular scandal and, either they or their survivors, are really in a bad place when it comes to their survivability, when it comes to the economics of the situation.

I know this is not a bill by which we are going to be able to fix that, but I think we still need to remember that there are plenty of victims still out there who are suffering from these diseases, and others—many of them—who find themselves in a very bad spot financially as a result of what happened to them. I think to have this kind of debate in the House and not have an opportunity to remember all of those who were affected would be unfair. That's why I wanted to put that on the record.

I also want to say that I am heartened by the changes that we have made to our blood collection system in this province and in this country. We are now doing a much better job than we did before of screening blood that comes from volunteers, in order to make sure that the

blood is not tainted with some kind of disease that could lead to somebody's illness or possibly death.

I think the good story out of all of that is that we learned from our mistakes. I think a society marks itself, when there is something wrong that goes on, by what we are prepared to do to fix it. In this particular case, we've gone a long way to try to address what were the failures in the system that did put us in this situation of many people having died, or getting a disease, as a result of tainted blood.

Now we find ourselves at this juncture where there is an application in order to collect blood and to pay people for the donation of that blood, at \$20 per donation. I've just got to say that I don't think that sits well with most of us. I would expect that this Legislature will vote to support this bill for the reasons that we all understand.

1650

I do want to point out one part of the bill that needs to be verified in committee. By my read of it, I think we're okay, but I think it's something we need to take a look at, and that is the import of blood plasma products from jurisdictions such as the United States where blood is collected and a fee is paid. In my read of the legislation, it looks like that's covered, but I think we need to make sure that we double check that, because we don't want to have a situation where we in our province have a policy where we say, "You will not pay people to donate blood," and then allow by the back door, through imports from other jurisdictions, blood to come in that may very well have been gathered by the payment of money to a volunteer.

Unfortunately, far too often, those people who tend to be attracted to giving that blood are those people at the lower end of the economic scale, and I think it speaks volumes in a negative way if somebody really wants to collect blood by that means. I think we need to make sure that the legislation as it stands is clear that imports of blood from those jurisdictions are treated in the same way as the blood that will be collected here in the province of Ontario.

I don't have much more to say. We don't plan on keeping this going for many days. I think we have a number of members—there's probably just about an hour left today, so we'll take an opportunity to speak to the issue as we see it. I think members of our caucus, as well as members of other caucuses, have things that they want to say about this. Like I say, at this point, we've only spoken to this particular bill for about an hour and a half. We have another hour coming up this afternoon. I would expect that other members want to speak to this so that we can put on the record what we think are the strengths and the weaknesses of this bill and, in our case, as New Democrats speak to the general support of what is being attempted.

I just end on the point that I started with: Where have you been since 2012? The government had ample opportunity to bring legislation to this House. For whatever reason, the government decided not to. I think that's too bad, but let's deal with it the best that we can, and we'll see where all of this leads in a very short time.

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

Hon. John Milloy: I enjoyed listening to the comments from my colleague the House leader from the New Democratic Party. I really want to pick up on a few points that he raised. First of all, the personal side of this: I think all of us, as members of the Legislature, as individuals, have encountered people who, due to their exposure to tainted blood, as it's called, have experienced just horrific consequences—particularly when you think back to what happened around the time of the Krever inquiry. Any piece of legislation that's about the blood supply system is very much about individuals and protecting them and public safety.

The bill that is before us, just to give a little bit of background—I think people are aware of the basics of it—if passed, would:

- prohibit paying donors for blood and blood plasma products;
- prohibit payments to individuals for their blood and plasma, including reimbursement of expenses or other forms of compensation;
- strengthen the government's enforcement powers in the case of violations; and
- expand the criteria considered for licensing blood collection facilities to ensure the public interest is upheld.

That's what it's about, Mr. Speaker—very much along the line of public interest. I welcome the positive comments from the House leader of the third party. I appreciate and respect the fact that there are members of that caucus who wish to put ideas or comments on the record.

But at the same time, he raised a number of technical points. I know that, in casual conversation, members on the other side have asked me about technical aspects of the bill. That's why we're urging members, if we can, to bring this stage of debate to a close so that it can go to committee so that some of these technical matters can be addressed.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I recall the opening remarks, leadoff speeches, made by our critic, Christine Elliott, the member from Whitby–Oshawa—a very principled person—and the very respectable comments that she made, not just about the Krever commission, but about some of the work she has done on select committees, and how important this is after the tainted blood scandal. Of course, the member from Nickel Belt as well, who is the critic for the NDP—both are highly respected and committed to doing the right thing in a policy sense.

I suspect that this bill will go to committee, where it should go. There are a lot of technical components to it, especially the part amending the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act. Gerard Kennedy is one of the lobbyists—a former member here—going around and saying, “What's going to happen to these collection centres?” A pretty ordinary fine protocol here.

The plasma issue versus the straight blood issue needs to be clarified, as well. I think it's important.

I hope the NDP don't put up too many more speakers this afternoon out of co-operation. Our House leader, Jim Wilson, and Christine Elliott have made it clear that we would like to see it go to committee. If you would like not to speak anymore, that would help me. If not, then we'll rag the puck as much as possible.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is always a pleasure to comment on some of the remarks that the member from Timmins–James Bay makes on any issue. This issue in particular, though, I know resonates very personally with him, and I think it actually resonates very well with our entire party.

As he mentioned, the member from Nickel Belt has been raising the issue of for-profit blood donations for a number of years. One of my first press conferences that I ever attended at this House had to do with the member from Nickel Belt bringing forward some victims of the for-profit blood donation process, and the negative effect that it had on their lives. That trickle-out effect, which is negative, has consequences not only for people emotionally and for their ability to participate in society but on the health care system as a whole.

I do share his concerns as to why it has taken so long for this government to bring forward this piece of legislation. Of course, we are going to support it, but I think he offered some very salient points and cautionary points as to how we should make sure this system is indeed created, monitored and implemented with the best interests of the citizens of this province in mind. There are some red flags going forward.

I am looking forward to the debate. I don't understand fully the criticism that the member has mentioned with regard to putting up speakers. It has taken a long time for this legislation to come to this place in this House in the history of this province. We have every intention of speaking to it and bringing forward the concerns of the constituents which we represent.

I fully support the comments made by the member from Timmins–James Bay, and I look forward to a full hour, or more, of debate.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: We support Bill 178, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act. It's extremely important. As you could rightly expect, health care is amongst the most regulated of professions. I myself, for example, am a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the Ontario Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Protective Association. Why is there so much oversight in the health care space? Because this is the most precious thing that we have.

When we have for-profit or monetary compensation for any kind of service of this nature, I think we're going down the wrong pathway. You don't need to go too far

out of the jurisdiction of Ontario to find, for example, facilities which will pay you for a lot more than just blood; they'll pay you even for organs: for kidneys—or, by the way, surrogate motherhood, and so on. This is probably not really the pathway that we in Ontario need to go down, especially when we as the governing party believe so strongly that our public, high-quality health care system is one of our most precious gifts that we give as a legacy to future generations.

I have to say as well that part of the reason I cite all these regulations and the kind of oversight that is brought to bear in the health care space is that I'm slightly appalled that there are institutions—for example, this company that has been cited in this legislation—that are essentially acting as quasi-medical laboratories and specimen collection centres, basically as a free-for-all. That is absolutely a regulated act. That is absolutely something that needs the scrutiny of the Ministry of Health and the government of Ontario. Whether it's storage of the materials that they collect, the needles that are used, the hygiene, the potential spread of blood-borne illnesses, and so on—the list is endless, as you can imagine, from a physician's point of view.

Let's get this to committee. Let's support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Timmins–James Bay, you have two minutes.

1700

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank everybody who commented. I just want to say: We as New Democrats support this bill. We have no intention of prolonging the debate. The bill has seen, I think, about an hour and 20 minutes worth of debate as of the beginning of today, and there was only about an hour and 15 minutes left in the day when we started this. We saw this as an opportunity to get some people on the record to speak to some of the very real issues that have happened with our blood collection system.

As I explained earlier, it's not just a question of what's in this bill but it's also a question of what we have learned from the tragedies of the past when it comes to the blood collection system. I think we owe it to those victims who unfortunately were diseased and died because of tainted blood that we take this moment to recognize what happened to these people and what continues to happen today to them and their families—not being properly compensated, and as a result, they're in a pretty bad spot.

Like I say, I can think of about three or four people who I've dealt with—there's more than that, but I can think of about three or four right now—who are diseased. I know at least two of them are dead; the other ones are still alive. But they're not able to work, and the ones who died were not able to work, either. They just lost everything. They lost their houses; they had to spend their RRSPs. They were left absolutely penniless by the time they died, these two particular individuals I know of. Then their widows and their families were left to hold the pieces.

It was actually a very tragic story in Ontario's and Canada's history of what we had thought was a good blood collection system. I think we owe it to the victims who suffered as a result of this to in fact take a moment to recognize what happened to them and to speak to why we think this bill is a good thing and needs to move forward. But we have no intention of holding this up for a long time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm actually very grateful for the opportunity to speak on Bill 178, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, this afternoon. I do think it's important to set some context for the debate and also to acknowledge the current weaknesses in the system as it stands in the province of Ontario.

I think it's important to acknowledge that voluntary blood donors give blood, plasma or cellular components for altruistic reasons, and that should be the fundamental driver for all donations as we go forward. As the representative of my community of Kitchener–Waterloo, I feel responsible for and dedicated to preserving the health and the safety of the people that I serve and Ontarians, more broadly. I think actually this would be a shared interest that we all have. If I were to ask all of you for your reason for becoming an MPP, for putting your name on the ballot, for taking time away from your family and for taking on the journey of politics in the province of Ontario, I'm sure that an overwhelming majority of you would respond with some sort of version of wanting to help others.

With these goals of public service in mind, I'm deeply concerned that it has taken this long for the Liberal government to address for-profit plasma clinics, though it has been clear for a number of years that there was a danger of a for-profit market emerging. All of us know this, and this is an issue in all of our ridings, and it is not an issue that has been well hidden. It is an issue that has been in the forefront. So it is very timely that we are here this afternoon. The government should have addressed this issue sooner and put more protections in place for the people of Ontario when the threat emerged. The dangers related to for-profit clinics are finally coming far too close to being realized.

Though the Liberal government blames their lack of initiative on the federal government—which is obviously an emerging theme with this government, pointing the finger at the federal government—it was actually in 1997 that the federal government adopted the perspective from the Krever commission report into the tainted blood scandal that provinces should decide the legality of blood products on their own. This is a provincial responsibility.

Since 1997, it was apparent that the Ontario government would have had to make a decision on their own, yet consecutive governments have failed to address this issue. It is 17 years later, and by now, we should have had a strategy in place to reconcile the province's demand for blood products with the need to protect the public from the painful mistakes we made in the past.

We are not even sure if the government will be able to prevent the for-profit clinics from buying plasma or beginning operations, so this is an outstanding question with regard to Bill 178. Our party does support this bill, but I must say that I am disturbed that it has taken the governing party to do their job, provide governance and leadership on issues which are critical to the life and safety of Ontarians.

The Liberals were aware that there was no legislation in place which would have allowed or empowered the Ministry of Health to decline the application of for-profit clinics for licence. This is well documented. The government ignored advice from our party and from the public health care officials on this issue, and now we have to play catch-up and try to clean up the mess that Ontario is now in.

For me, this sounds somewhat perhaps like a campaign slogan, but I'm just going off-script a little.

Other provinces have already acted on this issue. Héma-Québec, the equivalent of the Red Cross in this province, said they would not consider the using of for-profit methods of acquiring plasma. The World Health Organization has also stated that its goal is to move to a donation-only model by the year 2020. The federal drug administration supports the donation-only model. Canadian Blood Services has expressed concern with a for-profit scheme.

I have a very good working relationship with my local Canadian Blood Services chapter. In fact, we had a blood donation drive through our office just before Christmas. I was really encouraged to see the way that Canadian Blood Services is soliciting and encouraging, motivating and inspiring people to donate blood. That day, 17 new donors came from a call through our office locally in Kitchener-Waterloo. There were several companies—Sun Life was there. I think Communtech was there. There were companies who were saying to their employees, "This matters to us." I think it was a sign of corporate leadership: that they were endeavouring to inspire their employees to give something that is in them to give. There was great networking that day. It's one of those experiences that, as a new MPP—to inspire 17 new donors to come forward, network and bond and actually just give; do something good. It was just a very positive experience. I think that's how we should see blood and plasma donation.

Considering that concern about for-profit clinics is so widespread, especially within trusted and knowledgeable organizations, it is difficult to understand why the Liberal government has delayed acting on this issue for so long. It is clear from the experiences of other countries who have attempted pay-for-plasma schemes that it is not a safe or an effective method of growing the blood supply. It is neither beneficial for those people who are selling their blood nor those patients who will receive it.

The clinics would rely on those members of our community in particular who are low-income and need the money. This puts those people in vulnerable positions and promotes a system relationship in which the individ-

uals become reliant on the funds available at the for-profit centre. Paying people for their blood would deter those who currently donate from donating in the future.

I know that there is some sort of debate about this and there are some questions about it, but I think the research and evidence that we have within our grasp as policy-makers should guide us going forward. We want and need younger members of our community to donate blood, and the existence of for-profit clinics poses a significant threat to their donations and involvement.

I think what we are ultimately talking about in this House is shifting the culture around blood and plasma donation. I think that Canadian Blood Services has done an amazing job of advocating and promoting what we all have within us to give. I'm proud to say that I am a blood donor. I have my little badge of honour that they give you every time you donate 10 times. I think that the entire culture around blood and plasma donation is shifting. In many respects, that sector is well ahead of this Legislature, but it still remains to be seen and it still remains to be supported—a piece of legislation which protects the not-for-profit donation system.

Private clinics do not have the same high level of oversight that exists in the current publicly funded system. I am concerned that the plan for blood collected from the clinic is to sell the plasma to manufacturers, who would then turn the raw product into medications such as albumins to treat burn victims and immunoglobulins to treat immune disorders. Clearly, there is a reason why I am not in the medical field because I cannot pronounce some of the language.

1710

Ontario should not resort to a for-profit system, but should find other ways to create a sustainable donation-based system. To date, 54 countries, including resource-limited countries and not First World countries or even Second World countries, have achieved a national blood supply based on 100% voluntary donation. I do believe that we can achieve this in Canada and in Ontario. I do think that there have been some well-documented studies that point to where the public is best served by the not-for-profit model. That should be the direction that we should invest some of our energy in.

When I think of the for-profit model, I automatically go to the child care sector, where study after study after study questions the quality of the care. It's the same principle. You want to invest your energy and your finances, and certainly the legislation should be guided by the best practices that we know of. We have seen example after example—for instance in child care—of where the focus is on making money; that's where the money goes, towards the profit margin, versus the not-for-profit model, where the funding that is invested in the child care centre goes towards better-quality food, better-quality staff, supporting a model which is very much focused on securing an environment which benefits those children. I see the for-profit model very much pitted against the best interests of the people of this province.

The minister has not been clear on her directive to address this issue. I think that is an important piece. I

know that there has been some catching up on her part with regard to this piece of legislation. I was watching a scrum not that long ago where she was called out on it. If we can move this forward very quickly, I think we would absolutely be very supportive of that, because it has been a long time coming. At the time when the Minister of Health was questioned on her directive to address this issue, she suggested that Canadian Plasma Resources is covered by the existing legislation to regulate labs under the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act. However, Bill 178 includes amendments to this act and this legislation which would bring CPR under its rule. If Canadian Plasma Resources was already governed by this licensing act, then why were the changes needed? This is an outstanding question that we have to face.

I do, of course, want to speak in support of the bill. Obviously, we have wanted this to happen for quite some time. I urge haste and I think that there is a need to accelerate it in many respects, though I am disappointed it has taken this long. I will ask the government to hasten in creating a strategy for addressing our donation-based system and promote sustainability for the future.

I would like to also cite that there are several sources out there who have recognized that Ontario is quite far behind, that we have fallen behind on this file. For some reason, it just has not been a pressing issue for this government. There was a recent article in the *Toronto Star*, March 20, by Nicholas Keung. He said that “A proposed ban on paid blood donations is dangerously late now that a pay-for-plasma clinic has opened in Ontario....” This is a very key piece. This is actually what happened to some degree in the child care sector. As soon as for-profit commercial centres broke into this market, if you will—if you think that children should be considered in a market—as soon as that precedent has been set, then it’s hard to pull back on it. It’s hard to reverse that train out of the station. Opposition parties said, after Health Minister Matthews introduced legislation Thursday, that indeed we are struggling with the logistics of reversing the commercialization of blood products.

There is obviously a need to shift the culture around blood donation. There have been missed opportunities, I believe, throughout the education system and in the health care system. I do applaud the current health care profession for promoting blood donation and plasma donation—as I said, I am a donor.

It’s very similar, in many respects, to the issue of organ donation. I think, for some reason, that paying for blood or plasma is more appetizing or has a better feel to it than paying for organ donation, but really, the principles are very similar. Once you introduce money or finances into that relationship, into that negotiation and that bargaining, it changes the very principle of the original discussion.

I think we should all be more concerned around the overall health of all patients. All of us have seen the commercials, I hope: With every donation that you do

give, it takes five or six donations to potentially save a patient during a cancer treatment or during a severe car accident. It is something we should all be promoting as individual MPPs. If we all had a blood donation drive, as I did in my riding just before Christmas, we could make an impact on the levels of donation across the province, and we would be shifting that culture that I’ve been speaking about.

The World Health Organization and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have already developed a framework for global action to achieve 100% voluntary blood donation in every country, so we don’t have to reinvent the wheel here. We have to put a piece of legislation in place, and we have to leave some room for a little bit of creativity and some local leadership, but this is not something that we have to start from ground zero on. We can follow the lead of other jurisdictions, other countries that have embraced, if you will, this new culture of donating blood on a regular basis and motivating people to be part of something that genuinely just feels very good.

The issue around blood donors and creating blood donors and recognizing blood donors potentially as a provincial resource is that blood donors give blood, plasma or cellular components for altruistic reasons; that’s how I started my short comments here. They receive no payment for it, in cash or in kind. There is nothing else that motivates them to make the donation other than the fact that they understand they are being part of something which is good, which is altruistic, which has a benefit to their fellow human beings.

When you talk about some of the payments that people may get, this also includes time off work, other than that reasonably needed for the donation and travel. When I cited those corporations in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo who inspired blood donation, that was actually part of the equation. I think they were inspiring their employees and sort of rewarding that great behaviour by having a little bit of time off.

More importantly, it doesn’t take that long. That’s the important piece. You can give a pint of blood in 10 minutes, and they give you a coffee, they give you a juice. It’s a lot better than some places where you show up. Certainly, there are good reasons more than altruistic reasons. There are financial, economic impacts on the overall health care system for us to inspire blood and plasma donation and to shift that culture to recognize it.

While it has taken the Liberal government a long, long time to bring Bill 178, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, to this Legislature, it does, in fact, have the full support of New Democrats. While we certainly hoped it might come to this House a little bit sooner, we are looking forward to supporting it in its entirety, getting it to committee, listening to those informed voices across the province who share some of our concerns and perhaps making some amendments to make it better.

That’s in keeping with what we try to do here, day in and day out. We come to work. We try to make legislation stronger so it serves the needs of the people of this

province. We're very proud of that, and we will continue to do that kind of work.

1720

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the time to address Bill 178. I look forward to comments and the future debate.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm hoping we can get this through. I'm not hearing a lot of new news on this. As much as I enjoy the comments of my colleagues, I do think this is time-sensitive. There's this point that somehow the government has been dragging its feet on this. No one realistically anticipated this was going to be an issue because the licensing requirements in Ontario prohibited it. I knew this somewhat first-hand because I was involved on the front lines of the AIDS/HIV issue in my life. I quit my job to work without pay in this field.

The member from Timmins–James Bay made some very good points. I just want to endorse them with a great deal of sensitivity. He pointed out the challenges of the Krever inquiry, another part of my life because I was a witness for several days at the Krever inquiry because we ran the first “don't donate” blood drive. As much as that is a great passion of mine, because I lost almost all my friends when I turned 30—my address book was devoid of any name that wasn't crossed out. I don't have witnesses to most of my younger life because they've all died. I feel this incredible responsibility to continue to be a witness to a whole generation of young, particularly gay, men who lost their lives. At that time, the then-health minister, Jake Epp, declared that this was a moral issue, not a health issue, in the 1980s, and would not fund it. Those are real issues.

I would say this to the member of Kitchener–Waterloo: This is something we should expedite. Governments deal with complex issues. We can't anticipate every technical thing that some business or someone could use. This bill is about something very simple: It's about protecting voluntary blood donations, and that's very, very important. There really aren't safety issues here because of the reforms of the Krever inquiry.

What I'd like to do is get Bill 173 passed because people are actually dying because we don't have proper dooring legislation, and because we need the one-metre rule and we've got to deal with distracted driving. Those are the legislative priorities that we should bring forward. We shouldn't be dragging our feet on those, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's always interesting listening to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I was very optimistic when I was listening to her. She was talking about the celebration of giving the gift that we all have to give, giving blood, and her experience with corporations encouraging their employees to be good citizens. I commend her for having that kind of positive attitude.

This bill itself is one more example of a government that—I like to review things every once in a while, so

I've picked up this, Speaker. I'll send you a copy, if you wish. It says, “30 Years of Health Care Dysfunction.” There's a lot of work to be done in health care. I've got a constituent of mine who has idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. We can't even get the drug.

We support this bill. Our critic, Christine Elliott, made it very clear. But here's something that the people of Ontario should know: Under the Canada Health Act, there are five principles. You always ask: What are those five principles? Here they are: The act must be comprehensive—that means covering everything, I think; universal—everywhere; portable; accessible; and publicly funded. Generally they talk about how the government ignores the first principle of the whole thing: Is it medically necessary?

I think it's important to know those five principles. Every year we find that something is being chipped away at. They aren't deemed to be accessible anymore. Do you understand? What's with these drugs? We've got people with these catastrophic diseases and they can't get the drugs because of money. This means it costs too much, so let them die.

On this blood thing, we support the bill. I think it should go to the committee. It should be heard. It's clear today. In this House there are three medical doctors, I believe. And we have the oldest member of the Legislature of Ontario ever in history: Mr. Kwinter. I have great regard for him as well. I'd like him to get up and do a two-minute hit here on this, if you would.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a pleasure to stand, particularly after my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo speaks. Of course, she gave a very involved examination of this bill and why we support it.

Tommy Douglas said that every generation would have to fight for medicare anew. That's absolutely true in this generation. We see an assumed attack, given their ideology, from the Conservative federal government, on medicare. That, we could have expected.

But I bring to the House's attention the fact that under this Liberal administration here, we have delisted a number of things: eye examinations. Let me tell you, for some of the most impoverished in my riding, it is a real difficulty to get that. Chiropractic, physiotherapy: Many things have been cut back under Liberal rule, when, in fact, we should be expanding medicare.

We social democrats look across the ocean to social democratic countries where they have—wow—dental care and—amazing—pharmacare. I can tell you that also in my riding, there are a number of people who can't afford the drugs that they're prescribed. And they certainly can't afford dental care, even though this government has been promising dental care to those who can't afford it for a while now. We have yet to see, really, the results of that. We should be expanding the roll of dental care instead of privatizing, which is what this speaks to.

We have privatization of medicare going on in this province. Open Toronto Life: You will see executive

health clinics advertising, basically, OHIP-funded programs, but for those who would pay thousands of dollars for the same examinations. This has to stop, and this Liberal government isn't stopping it. This is the problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Vaughan with further comments.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. After listening to the member from Durham and the member from Parkdale–High Park and, certainly, the eloquent comments from my colleague the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, I am a tiny bit disappointed that I didn't have the opportunity, after hearing what they said, to listen to most of the original remarks made by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. Having said that, I am delighted to learn that the members who have spoken since that original address by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo seemed very supportive of this bill, Bill 178.

I think it is important, as the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure said just a moment ago, that we move forward with this, that we get this bill to committee. I think it is important for a number of reasons. I sincerely hope that for the balance of the debate around this particular bill—a debate that I believe shouldn't go on for a particularly extended period simply because it is an important matter that needs to get moving; it needs to be dealt with in a positive way. I would hope that, for the balance of the debate, members on all three sides of this House would focus their remarks, their thoughts and their contributions to this debate and keep their remarks germane to the matters that are contained in the bill, helping to underscore why it is so important for us as a Legislature, for the people we represent in all of our communities across Ontario, to move forward.

I'm happy to lend my voice and my support to this particular bill. I hope that we will continue to have a positive and productive and fruitful discussion around the bill and move forward with it at the earliest possible time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo, you have two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members from Vaughan, Parkdale–High Park, Durham, and of course, the Minister of Transportation, who I appreciate always and consistently brings a personal story to this Legislature. This is a personal issue. The privatization of blood donation should be a personal issue, and it should be a shared responsibility that we all push forward.

The concern and the caution, as it relates to Bill 178—I'm not sure; I think that this is the concern—is that this piece of legislation will prevent a parallel paid and voluntary system, because we already have a for-profit plasma clinic in place in Ontario.

For the Minister of Transportation to get up and say, "This has been a long-standing issue, and I've lost friends"—and I have lost friends. I think that if we all looked into our own lives and went back in our own history, some of us have very personal stories of people whom we have lost because of the tainted-blood scandal. You don't have to look that far; you really do not.

It's more than a cautionary tale; it's something that should guide us as we develop legislation for the future. The fact that we already now are embarking on, and the government has allowed a window for, parallel paid versus a voluntary system of blood donation to happen in the province of Ontario is a missed opportunity. It is something that should guide us as we go forward. We should ensure that we have some strategic areas around establishing a provincial blood program, creating a culture of voluntary blood donations and building a stable blood donor pool by motivating and recruiting healthy participants.

This is the challenge before us. We welcome opportunity to debate this legislation. It is very, very important to the health of the entire province.

1730

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to have another opportunity to speak on another bill, Bill 178. We're happy to send it off to committee as fast as we can.

But it is interesting to hear a couple of Liberal members who say that there is urgency to this issue, that there's nothing new that the opposition parties have brought forth. "Let's get on with it," blah, blah. It's always useful to remember the fact that all three political parties have been in that same circle. When you get here, you will understand it again, or you will be reminded about what those days were like when you were over here—just as a little subtle reminder.

But I would say that when you speak about the urgency of the matter and, "Let's get on with it," you will remember that back in November 2012, Canadian Plasma Resources had made an application, and they were ready to open up a private for-profit clinic in downtown Toronto. Everyone was aware of that—everyone. It was a while back, 2012. We knew, everyone seems to have known, I think you knew, and yet somehow it didn't seem as if you were pressured to move quickly on the matter. So I think to myself when you say, "We should move quickly on the bill," now that you've introduced it, where were you when this problem was before us? Why does it take so long for the government to respond?

So it takes you a long time to respond, and that's not urgent. Then you bring forth your bill, and now things are urgent. You follow the train of thought? That's the little problemo I bring to you as a matter of consideration, because the Ministry of Health delayed, dallied. They applied to Health Canada; that's where they went first. You would know, of course, that it would eventually come to you. But it doesn't matter; they went there first and made their application there.

Health Canada decided, of course, that they needed to consult on the issue, and they brought a whole lot of people together, including the Ministry of Health. Various health organizations were there, Health Canada, of course, Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec. They all consulted, talked about it. Health Canada, at the end of it, produced a summary report.

The summary report has been available to the government on the website since July 26 last year. On July 26, 2013, Health Canada posted the report, as well as some backgrounders as to what this was all about. They opened it up for comments, and pretty much anybody and everybody was able to comment.

You will know, and you will remember, that the Ministry of Health has a lot of resources. They do, a lot of workers—

Ms. Catherine Fife: A lot of money.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A lot of pecunia is there as well—and resources, to be fair. So they knew what was going on with this file. At the end of it, Health Canada said the following—and we might have expected it; I'm not sure:

“There is no federal legislation that prohibits an establishment that collects blood or plasma from compensating donors. Compensation of donors falls within the authority of the” provincial or territorial governments.

You might expect them to do that; I'm not quite sure. I would have anticipated that as a provincial government. I certainly would have been ready with that response and certainly ready to have something in place.

As if that wasn't enough, the federal minister has known from the get-go—or at least this minister has known—that the federal government was not going to prevent a clinic from opening, and that it was quite fine with them to allow donors to be paid for their plasma.

We had a Health Canada consultation report posted. We knew that the federal government would likely be on their side and would likely say to you: “By the way, you, provincial government, and you, provincial minister, are in charge. This is your problemo, your responsibility.” And we—you, the government—dilly-dallied. You do that on a regular basis.

Quebec, by the way, didn't do that. Quebec took a different route and they did not hesitate. They did not wait until there was somebody knocking on the door, saying, “By the way, I'm opening up a paid donor plasma clinic down the road from your Legislature and I intend to open quite a few more,” and expecting that the Quebec government would simply say, “Yes, go right ahead. By the way, we're going to have something to deal with you in a couple of years.” Quebec didn't wait—they act. But Ontario delays until they bring forth a bill and then say now that it's urgent.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Now, what are you doing: delaying, Rosario? Again?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm just talking about you, really. I was talking about you, Minister, actually, earlier on, and your government and your health minister. I appreciate the fact that I'm debating the bill, which is what opposition parties tend to do.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You're whining.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Me, whining? I love that. The Minister of Transportation says that I'm whining. No, no; I don't whine. I do not whine. That's not my style.

Just to help you out: You will remember that there was a commission, the Krever commission. You had that information—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I was a witness.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, whether you were a witness or not, you're a minister here. We've got a health ministry; they knew what those recommendations were, and yet it takes governments a whole long time to respond to that.

What were those five principles that you were aware of? Numero uno: “Blood is a public resource” that we all need to live. I don't think anybody would disagree with that. The second—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Then why are we delaying?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister says, “Why are we delaying?” The question I'm trying to put to you is, why did you delay so long to bring forth a bill?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You don't treat your wife like this, do you? Always arguing—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But, Minister of Transportation, you're always arguing with everyone else, including me; I don't understand that.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm Irish, and I—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And I'm Italian; I don't know either.

The second was: “Donors should not be paid.” Could that be any clearer, that donors should not be paid? They certainly don't equivocate like some politicians. It was a very clear principle, to make sure that the Canadian blood supply stays safe and that donors should not be paid. That was enough to get the government of Quebec to act and pass legislation that made it quite clear that in their province—in the province of Quebec—you are not allowed to pay for blood or plasma. But in our government, it took us a while.

The third principle: “Sufficient blood should be collected so that importation from other countries is unnecessary.” This is an issue that has been brought forward a number of times during this debate. Ontario does import some medication and different therapeutic agents that are made from plasma from other countries, and the third principle by the Krever commission was that “Sufficient blood should be collected so that importation from other countries is unnecessary.” In my mind, it's very clear, and it gives us a pathway. It gives the Minister of Health a pathway to say and to do—not just to say, but to do something about it.

1740

Ms. Catherine Fife: What took them so long?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It does take a long while. It takes people like H el ene Campbell, who, on her own, by tweeting about organ donations, was able to increase the number of people who registered, who were giving blood, who were ready to give blood. It takes individuals like that to get Ontarians to actually do the right thing. Governments have the power and the resources to be able to do a lot more than what individuals like H el ene Campbell was able to do on her own. That's the job of

governments. We think they can and should be doing more, but sometimes they are very, very slow to act.

The fourth principle is, "Access to blood products should be free and universal." I don't think that is complicated, either. They should be free and universal, something that I dare say is becoming a serious problem in this province. We are privatizing more and more of our health care services, something that scares me incredibly. It scares me because those without income are suffering and will suffer more and more as time goes on. As people earn less and less and have fewer jobs that pay well, where job security is at risk on a regular—daily—basis, that will become a growing concern for the citizens of Ontario.

We kick people out of hospitals in a hurry. No sooner are you in a hospital than they kick you out as fast as they possibly can, and when you're out of that hospital, many of the services that are paid there are no longer paid. Once you're out of that hospital, it comes right out of your little pocket. If you have deep pockets, God bless, you're okay.

We know there are a lot of billionaires in the world, and we know there are a lot of billionaires in Canada. In fact, 83 families in Canada—God bless them—earn more than 11 million Canadians put together.

Hon. John Milloy: No, no.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know it's hard to believe, House leader. It's hard to believe, and I don't hear you saying that all too often. People like me, people like New Democrats, have to say that. But you've got a whole lot of wealthy people, and there are not as many—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no. There aren't too many Liberals that I can count on this worker's hand who will stand up and be prepared to be social democrats in their views. I can count them on my hand—federal and provincial.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm not sure about that.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Not sure about that.

Speaker, there are a whole lot of wealthy people in this province. They're going to be okay with privatizing services. They're quite happy to have the organization, the Canadian Plasma Resources company, set up shop here on Adelaide; I think it is number 83. The member from Eglinton—Lawrence might remind those wealthy friends that he has that they could just go down there and get their plasma for a little amount of money. It won't cost them much.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's pocket change.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is pocket change for wealthy people, but for ordinary folk, it's a problemo. We shouldn't have to pay for that.

I am worried about how we privatize more and more. I have got to tell you, Speaker, it is all done incrementally and very surreptitiously. Nothing is ever done so very clearly and loudly. The previous Conservative government did it ever so quietly, and Liberals do it just as

subtly and quietly so that nobody notices. In the end, when people finally lose a service, they say, "When did that happen? Was it the Tories? Was it the Liberals?" People can't even remember. They won't even know. Tories will do a lot more and a lot faster. Liberals will do it a lot more slowly, subtly, quietly. They do it, but it is incremental, and it does happen. I don't see that many Liberals on this hand who stand up each and every day saying, "I don't like it." I don't see that many. See this hand? Not many on that hand.

This bill does bring forth some amendments, and it doesn't speak about five principles; it speaks about three principles. So I'm not quite sure why we didn't speak about those five principles mentioned by the Krever commission. They only referenced three, so something worries me about what we've left out, something that we should be able to talk about in committee.

But one of the things that the minister does introduce that is subject to a great deal of inquiry, debate and possible confusion is that the minister says: "Within Ontario's health care system, blood donations are viewed as a public resource"—no problem—but, "2. Blood donors should not be paid, except in exceptional circumstances."

Speaker, that worries me. I want to bring my little knowledge of the OMB to make the connection with this. Bill 51, which was introduced by a former minister, Mr. Gerretsen—he said that we're finally going to give the municipalities the power that they've been looking for for a long, long time—

Hon. John Milloy: What does this have to do with blood?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm making the connection; I'll be right back.

Finally municipalities will be able to have the power to do their own land use planning. The language they introduced was—Speaker, you would know this—that the OMB has to "have regard to" municipal decisions.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm not seeing the connection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You will.

So what we know—I'm not even a lawyer, and I know this; think about that. There are a whole lot of lawyers who understand that "have regard to" means, "We don't have to pay any attention to it." All it means is, "We listened to the city, they put forth their case, we regarded their opinion, so to speak, but we don't have to listen to it."

That language was introduced by a former minister.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Good to see you, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I came here to see you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I love that. The Premier came to hear the remaining part of my speech. That is so nice. That is good.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was watching you from my office. I just had to come.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Even better—a face-to-face kind of encounter.

The whole idea of "having regard to"—this bill was overseen by a minister who was, himself, a lawyer.

Lawyers understand that “having regard to” means absolutely zero, nada, nihil, nothing; they all start with an N, did you notice? Unless you change the language to “conform to” or “consistent with,” “having regard to” is weak and is absolutely meaningless.

This language here, “Blood donors should not be paid, except in exceptional circumstances”: What does that mean? Are we leaving ourselves open? Of course we are.

What you’re doing is allowing these private companies to hire these expensive lawyers who are going to come, in each and every case, and defend this clause that says “except in exceptional circumstances.” There are always going to be exceptional circumstances, and lawyers will make it so because that’s their job. Lawyers get paid very well to deal with these kinds of nuances of language.

I can tell you, we will be buried in legalese, in a legalistic defence of a private sector that wants to do this. They will defend—Doctor, tell me if I’m wrong. Let me know in your two minutes. I need your opinion. Right? There are various medical doctors in here. Help me out. Do you think I’m correct? Do you think those private clinics will hire those expensive lawyers to go and put in a defence until they get what they want?

And they do. Wealthy people usually get what they want.

Developers are getting what they want at the OMB on a regular basis. Why? Because they’ve got a whole lot of pecunia to hire the best lawyers and to hire the best planners. They’re ready to go as soon as the appeal happens. You understand, Speaker, because you were a municipal councillor. You know how this works.

1750

So we’ve got some concerns. Obviously, we wanted to go to committee hearings, because we want to hear from the doctors, we want to hear from the lawyers—the good ones at least—and from the general public who might have some concerns about that specific issue that I mentioned. They may be all right with the rest of it and they might say, “Finally, the government has acted; God bless. It took them a long while.” But now we have it—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And the Minister of Transportation says, “Let’s get on with it,” and I agree with him. Let’s get on with it.

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

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I heard with much interest and passion what the member from Trinity–Spadina had to say. This is what I have to say to him in response: The fact is that this is a bill that needs to pass in a time-sensitive manner. If you’re really serious, if you truly want to protect the integrity of Ontario’s blood supply, I’m going to ask that we stop delaying, we stop holding up this bill and send it to second reading right away. I know you have some concerns. The practical way to address those concerns is in committee. The sooner we can get it to second reading, the sooner we can get it to

committee. We can make it a better bill and pass it in time.

The health critics for both the PC Party and the NDP have agreed that this bill needs to be passed as soon as possible. I don’t understand why the member from Trinity–Spadina spent 15 minutes talking about all sorts of things when what we really need now is not talk; what we really need now is action.

I’m going to ask one more time: This is truly a time-sensitive bill. We need to pass it. That does not mean that we don’t address concerns that you have. I’m just asking for us to do it in committee, move it to committee, because all I can say is, if we don’t do it, we will be responsible for this company going ahead and doing exactly what we don’t want them to do. All I’m going to ask is, let’s stop holding it up and move this bill forward.

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

Mr. John O’Toole: The member from Trinity–Spadina is always entertaining and generally informative. However, I would say this, though: The idea that it’s time-sensitive is another glowing example of poor management. Here’s why. When the member from Nickel Belt spoke two weeks ago, she made a very important point, that there’s a clinic being developed now in downtown Toronto—the leasehold improvements are over \$6 million, I heard. This company is based on a private model, which this bill is trying to rule out of order.

Here’s what I’d be interested in. In fact, it should go to committee. But one of the most important questions is, would this present building, working with the Ministry of Health people, be in a position to sue the Wynne government? The reason why I say that is because, knowingly the ministry—there’s a pilot activity going on—has expended money for a project that today is not illegal, as it is in other provinces.

I’m telling and putting on the record today that I sense that this government has got another major problem of mismanagement. In this case here, it may not be a billion dollars, but this company under a legal activity has invested \$6 million to develop a clinic to collect plasma, a much-needed product for developing the kinds of medications that are around today. This bill is putting them out of business. If I was the business person and the investor, I would be suing the Wynne government the Monday after this passes. I do say this in all sincerity because the Premier—

Mr. Mike Colle: Shame on you.

Mr. John O’Toole: No, no, Mr. Colle, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I’m telling you this because this is a commercial world we’re in. There are well-intended investors. Other jurisdictions have this option of paying for plasma. It’s just an idea and I think it should be listened to and studied.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s always a pleasure to comment on the amazing comments from the member from

Trinity–Spadina. I think his most salient point for me is the increased privatization in health care we have seen. It is insipid. Actually, it has slid right into the province. Quite honestly, it is quite alarming sometimes to hear members of the government stand up in this House and say, “Let’s get this piece of legislation to committee and let’s make it stronger,” as the member did opposite. Why would you not bring a piece of strong legislation, first and foremost, to the floor of this Legislature? Why would you not build it right the first time? And why would you stand up in this House and say to us on this side of the House, “Let’s rush this through; get it passed,” when it has taken you so long to do the right thing in the first place? I think the member from Trinity–Spadina has made those points in a very eloquent way, as he usually does.

There is an outstanding issue that needs to be brought to this House, and it goes like this: “Currently, Canadian Plasma Resources (CPR) is in the pilot phase of their operations. At this point, unless Bill 178 is law, CPR could provide payment to donors.” This state of affairs has existed already in this province for many years, and now you say, “Let’s rush it through.”

We need to bring the concerns of our constituents to this place. We need to share our concerns with you. We need to hold you to account. It is our job, and quite honestly, I think that we’re doing a pretty damn good job of it. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to say that I think the member from Trinity–Spadina made some very profound points. They weren’t about the bill, but they were very profound, so I’m going to make some comments that are profound and not about the bill too. He talked about the NDP and its social conscience.

Today we had interfaith leaders from all across Ontario at the ISARC conference, the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition. Alex Himelfarb spoke—the former head of the Privy Council in Ottawa. He talked about the importance of taxes and the common good.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope the member is going to tie his comments to the bill and the previous speaker.

Mr. Mike Colle: He wasn’t talking about the bill; I don’t want to talk about the bill.

Anyway, he talked about the need for people to invest in health care, invest in schools, and invest in infrastructure for the common good. The NDP used to talk like that. They no longer do, because they’re the party of what they call business. They’re the business party now, big-business business. They’re sort of Tories in the slow lane.

Anyway, I also wanted to say that the NDP used to be for local democracy. They fought against the megacity—the member from Beaches–East York.

In committee the other day, I was shocked. The NDP blocked the proceeding of Bill 166, which would give the people in the city of Toronto a say about the ranked ballot, give them the right to debate that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to come back to the legislation.

Mr. Mike Colle: The NDP blocked Bill 166. This is not the NDP of Howard Hampton and it’s not the NDP of Bob Rae. I don’t know. What NDP is it?

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

Mr. Mike Colle: It’s the NDP of the business—

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

The member for Trinity–Spadina, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I think, deep down, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence is a social democrat in a hurry. That’s what I think—deep down. But it’s hard to say; I don’t know. I appreciate your comments—having nothing at all to do with mine.

Speaker, we’ve only had two and a half hours on this bill, and I appreciate the fact that the government wants to pass it quickly. I do appreciate it. That’s their job and that’s their role. But, having had only two and a half hours of debate, it’s not as if it can be said that we are slowing down the bill or that we are trying to stop the bill. That’s not the case. The fact that a number of members want to speak to the bill, which we have done today, and the fact that we raised some issues, doesn’t mean that we’re going to stop this bill. That’s not at all what we’re doing.

We’re going to be supporting this bill. We want it to go to hearings. That’s something that will happen and will happen soon. But we did want this opportunity to raise our points and to say, as a reminder, that if you were concerned about Canadian Plasma Resources setting up shop—a private, for-profit clinic—in November 2012, you would have moved with the same speed as you’re trying to get the opposition to move on this bill. If you didn’t care enough in November 2012 to move quickly, after you knew that this private clinic was going to be set up—and they’ve got three on the go—I’m saying to you, let’s be careful about the accusations. That’s all I’m saying.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak. I’m very happy to have had that chance.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

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

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

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
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Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
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Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
John O'Toole, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Catherine Fife
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Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Monte Kwinter, Jane McKenna
Rick Nicholls, Peter Tabuns
Bill Walker
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
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Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6400
Andrew “Andy” Houston	
Mr. Ted Arnott	6400

**MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Release of documents	
Mr. Steve Clark	6400
Events in Ukraine	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6400
Sarah Burke Memorial Highway	
Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	6400
Mary Ann Found and Brenda Metcalf	
Mr. John O’Toole.....	6400
Ontario Arts Council grants / Subventions du Conseil des arts de l’Ontario	
Mme France Gélinas	6401
Kemptville College	
Mr. John Yakabuski	6401
Affordable housing	
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	6401
Ontario economy	
Mr. Ted Arnott	6402
Bridge building contest	
Ms. Mitzie Hunter.....	6402

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs	
Mrs. Laura Albanese	6402
Report adopted	6402

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

Christmas Tree Day Act, 2014, Bill 185, Mr. Wilson / Loi de 2014 sur le Jour de l’arbre de Noël, projet de loi 185, M. Wilson	
First reading agreed to.....	6403
Mr. Jim Wilson	6403

Accountability for Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner Act, 2014, Bill 186, Mr. Harris / Loi de 2014 sur la responsabilisation du commissaire à l’environnement, projet de loi 186, M. Harris	
First reading agreed to.....	6403
Mr. Michael Harris.....	6403

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Student safety, health and well-being	
Hon. Liz Sandals	6403
Presto fare card	
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	6404
Student safety, health and well-being	
Mr. Rob Leone	6404
Presto fare card	
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	6405
Student safety, health and well-being	
Mr. Peter Tabuns	6405
Presto fare card	
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6406

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Physiotherapy services	
Mr. John O’Toole.....	6406
Long-term care	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6407
Greenbelt	
Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	6407
Long-term care	
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	6407
Gasoline prices	
Mme France Gélinas	6408
Use of digital technologies	
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	6408
Senior citizens’ housing	
Mr. Frank Klees	6408
Regional centres for the developmentally disabled	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	6408
Minimum wage	
Ms. Soo Wong.....	6409
Lyme disease	
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	6409
Visitors	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6409

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS /
AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC
ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS**

**Broader Public Sector Advertising Act, 2014, Bill
134, Mr. Bisson / Loi de 2014 sur la publicité des
organismes du secteur parapublic, projet de loi
134, M. Bisson**

Mr. Gilles Bisson	6410
Ms. Dipika Damerla	6412
Mrs. Jane McKenna	6412
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6413
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	6414
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6415
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6415
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	6416
Mr. Gilles Bisson	6417

**Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2014, Bill 174,
Mr. Paul Miller / Loi de 2014 modifiant la Loi sur
les régimes de retraite, projet de loi 174, M. Paul
Miller**

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6417
Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	6419
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	6420
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	6421
Mr. Bob Delaney.....	6422
Mr. Jack MacLaren	6422
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	6423
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6424
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6424

**Saving Apprentices' Jobs Act, 2014, Bill 169,
Mr. Dunlop / Loi de 2014 pour la sauvegarde des
emplois pour apprentis, projet de loi 169,
M. Dunlop**

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6425
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	6427
Hon. Brad Duguid	6428
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	6429
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	6430
Ms. Soo Wong.....	6431
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	6431
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	6432

Mr. John O'Toole.....	6432
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6432

**Broader Public Sector Advertising Act, 2014, Bill
134, Mr. Bisson / Loi de 2014 sur la publicité des
organismes du secteur parapublic, projet de loi
134, M. Bisson**

Second reading agreed to	6433
--------------------------------	------

**Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2014, Bill 174,
Mr. Paul Miller / Loi de 2014 modifiant la Loi sur
les régimes de retraite, projet de loi 174, M. Paul
Miller**

Second reading agreed to	6433
--------------------------------	------

**Saving Apprentices' Jobs Act, 2014, Bill 169,
Mr. Dunlop / Loi de 2014 pour la sauvegarde des
emplois pour apprentis, projet de loi 169,
M. Dunlop**

Second reading negated.....	6434
-----------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, Bill 178,
Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2014 sur le don de sang
volontaire, projet de loi 178, Mme Matthews**

Mr. Gilles Bisson	6434
Hon. John Milloy	6436
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6436
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6436
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	6436
Mr. Gilles Bisson	6437
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6437
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	6440
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6440
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6440
Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	6441
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6441
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6441
Ms. Dipika Damerla	6444
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6444
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6444
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6445
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6445
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	6445

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 3 April 2014 / Jeudi 3 avril 2014

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Protecting Students Act, 2014, Bill 103, Mrs. Sandals / Loi de 2014 protégeant les élèves, projet de loi 103, Mme Sandals

Mr. Rob Leone	6379
Mme France Gélinas	6381
Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	6382
Mr. Rod Jackson	6382
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6382
Mr. Rob Leone	6383
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	6383
Hon. Liz Sandals	6385
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6385
M. Michael Mantha.....	6386
Ms. Soo Wong.....	6386
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	6386
Mrs. Jane McKenna	6387
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	6388

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Bill Walker	6388
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	6388
Ms. Mitzie Hunter.....	6388
Mr. John Yakabuski	6388
Hon. Michael Coteau	6388
Mr. Rob Leone	6388
Mr. Robert Bailey	6388
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	6388
Mr. Frank Klees	6389
Hon. Ted McMeekin.....	6389
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6389
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	6389

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Power plants

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6389
Hon. John Milloy	6389

Power plants

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6390
Hon. John Milloy	6390

Power plants

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6391
Hon. John Milloy	6391

Power plants

Ms. Andrea Horwath	6391
Hon. John Milloy	6391

Pan Am Games

Mr. Rod Jackson.....	6392
Hon. Michael Chan	6392

Power plants

Mr. Peter Tabuns	6393
Hon. John Milloy	6393

Social assistance

Mr. Grant Crack	6393
Hon. Ted McMeekin	6393

Transportation infrastructure

Mr. Bill Walker	6394
Hon. John Milloy	6394
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	6394

Power plants

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	6394
Hon. John Milloy	6394

Social enterprise

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	6395
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6395

Rondeau Provincial Park

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	6395
Hon. David Oraziatti	6396

Government advertising

Mr. Gilles Bisson	6396
Hon. John Milloy	6396

Aboriginal programs and services

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	6397
Hon. David Zimmer	6397
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	6397

Tobacco control

Mr. Steve Clark	6397
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	6397

Ontario Municipal Board

Mr. Rosario Marchese	6398
Hon. Bill Mauro	6398

Volunteers

Ms. Soo Wong.....	6399
Hon. Michael Coteau.....	6399

Birthday celebrations

Hon. John Milloy	6399
Mr. John Yakabuski	6399

Continued on inside back cover