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Thursday 7 November 2013

Jeudi 7 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

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

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am honoured to stand in this assembly on behalf of my constituents in London West today to deliver my inaugural speech. I think I'm the last of the gang of five, as I've heard some people refer to us—affectionately, of course.

I want to begin by thanking the people of London West for the trust they have placed in me and their willingness to empower me as their voice. It's an enormous responsibility and one that I take very seriously. I also want to thank the hundreds of volunteers who worked so hard on my behalf, who spent countless hours knocking on doors, putting up signs, distributing leaflets and talking to voters on the phone. Special thanks to my NDP caucus colleagues, who took time out of their incredibly busy schedules—and I've come to realize over the last few months just how busy their schedules are—to come to London and help in my campaign. I can tell you that the motivation, the enthusiasm, the dedication of our volunteers was perhaps the single most important factor in my by-election success.

But there are other key factors that made a huge difference and contributed to my being here today. In particular, I want to thank NDP leader Andrea Horwath for her efforts in London West, not just during the by-election but in the many months leading up to the campaign. Her regular questions in the Legislature about London issues, her frequent visits to our community and her commitment to getting results for the people of Ontario were noticed by the voters of London West. And

although the people of London West did not have a history of voting NDP, they had a strong desire for change. They liked what they saw in Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP.

They also liked what they saw in me, as a working mother and professional policy researcher, a person of integrity who had served for 13 years as a trustee on the Thames Valley District School Board, whose roots in the community were deep and whose motivations for entering public life were clear.

One of the things I heard most often during the campaign was people's lack of trust in politicians at all levels of government, and I can't imagine what I would hear now with the auditor's report on the gas plants, the Senate suspensions and other recent events. But when I decided to put my name forward, I wanted to challenge the cynicism that so many people feel about politics. I wanted to show that principle and integrity can trump political self-interest. This was, in fact, what led me to declare as a candidate for the NDP.

In particular, it was the imposition of Bill 115, the politically motivated attempt to gut collective agreements and flex some muscle against public sector unions, that became the tipping point in my decision to run for provincial office. I know that Bill 115 was an important factor in the election of my friend and former trustee colleague, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, and it is in many ways the elephant in the room for the bill we are debating this morning, Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Bill 115 was the Liberals' final offer during the last round of collective bargaining, if what happened last spring could be called bargaining at all. Bargaining is supposed to be a process in which both sides bring issues to the table and negotiate and discuss about the priorities they want to achieve. It is a process of give and take, in which both sides recognize that they may have to give a little here to move forward in other areas. This is not what happened last spring.

Instead, the Liberals placed a series of non-negotiable items on the table and said to both unions and school boards, "Take it or leave it, and if you don't take it, we're going to force you to take it by legislating collective agreements." I know all this because I was there. I was there as a trustee and former chair of a school board, and I was there as a member of the executive of the Ontario Public School Boards Association. I was, quite frankly, appalled by the government's willingness to risk all the gains that had been made in public education over the years and to throw our system and our students into turmoil.

I don't mind saying that gains had been made in public education, particularly since the crisis under Mike Harris and the Tories, because I am someone who believes in acknowledging when good ideas come forward, regardless of which party they come from, if those ideas are going to improve the lives of the people of this province. In fact, I was ready to leave partisan politics back in 1995, when I moved to London with my husband, who is a political science professor at Huron University College, after having worked as a political staffer to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations during the NDP government.

I had done my undergrad at Western and looked forward to returning to London and making London my home. I was raised in Dundas, Ontario, the eldest of three children born to immigrant parents; my father is German, and my mother was from Scotland. They arrived in their teens with little formal education and, in my father's case, very little English. But my father was able to learn a trade as a carpenter and, thanks to his union, earned a decent living enabling him to support his wife and three children.

My brother, who is now 50 and lives at home with my dad, has an intellectual disability. It was the experience of growing up with him, and seeing the bullying he went through at school and my mother's efforts to advocate on his behalf, that contributed to my interest in public education and my commitment to ensuring that students have the supports they need to be successful. It was also what drew me to the NDP, the party most committed to the full participation of people with disabilities.

I joined the NDP when I was doing my master's in political science at McMaster University, and became involved in the 1987 federal by-election in Hamilton Mountain. As a young woman, I was inspired by NDP candidate and former Ottawa mayor Marion Dewar, who became the first of many strong women mentors for me. Marion ran successfully in that by-election and offered me a job on Parliament Hill.

After three years in Ottawa, I came here to Queen's Park in 1990 to work in the minister's office with Marilyn Churley, another important mentor for me and someone who later broke new ground for women across Canada as Ontario's first woman Deputy Speaker.

Following the 1995 election, we moved to London, where I was able to spend some time at home with my family. My son was a toddler at the time, and I had a brand new infant daughter. I also returned to school for a postgraduate certificate at Fanshawe College and embarked on a career as a communications consultant and, later, policy researcher. For the past decade, I have worked at Academica Group, a private sector research firm located in London West.

When my son started JK in 1997, I was excited about taking on a new role as a parent and becoming involved in my school community. But I was shocked and dismayed by the chaos created in education by the Harris government's radical overhaul of school board governance and education funding.

When the first post-amalgamation election was held in 2000, I decided to run for the Thames Valley District School Board. I was proud to work with trustees across the province to advocate for students, including Premier Wynne and Minister Sandals, who were both trustees at the time, in opposing the Harris cuts and demanding that public education be adequately funded.

0910

But of all the initiatives I've worked on over my years at the school board, I'm proudest of the work I did on behalf of LGBT students in 2003, who held a protest on the lawn of the school board because they did not feel safe in our schools. This was before same-sex marriage was legalized in Canada and long before the province legislated gay-straight alliances. To address the student concerns, I led an ad hoc committee that developed a comprehensive action plan, including GSAs, to address discrimination against LGBT students.

At the board, I've had a long-standing interest in the needs of marginalized and at-risk youth, and sat for many years on the special education advisory committee and the First Nations advisory committee.

I also had the opportunity to meet regularly with area MPPs, and I have to say how impressed I consistently was by the interest and commitment to public education that was shown by MPPs from all three parties. In particular, I want to acknowledge the member from London-Fanshawe, now my colleague in the NDP caucus; the Minister of Health, who is also the member from London North Centre; the member from Oxford, Uncle Ernie; the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London; and the former member from London West, Chris Bentley—who all took the time to come to meetings with trustees to hear the school board perspective on provincial issues and to take the concerns forward to Queen's Park.

As the new member for London West, I want to thank former MPP Chris Bentley for his 10 years of dedicated service to our community. During the by-election, I heard lots of concerns about the gas plants and the Liberals' record in government, but at the same time, people also told me about the respect they had for Chris Bentley as a person and as someone who was active and involved and committed to his community.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the issues that were top of mind for people during the by-election and the issues on which the voters of London West expect to see their government take action. London West is largely a residential community with higher-than-average income levels and higher-than-average levels of education. It has many unique neighbourhoods that are known for their strong sense of community and civic engagement, with residents who come together to celebrate and collaborate on community projects. It includes London's largest urban green space, Springbank Park, the setting for many charitable walks and community picnics that demonstrate the spirit of generosity and volunteerism that is the core of London West.

The riding is also enriched by the many immigrants and new Canadians, primarily from the Latino and Mus-

lim communities, who share their culture and traditions and strengthen intercultural dialogue and exchange.

Many of the residents of my riding are white-collar professionals and knowledge-economy workers employed in MUSH sector jobs in municipal offices, the university, schools and hospitals. London lays claim to several world-class medical research facilities as well as the high-profile post-secondary institutions of Western University and Fanshawe College. I'm proud to say I'm a graduate of both.

Although the riding does not have a large number of manufacturing firms, many manufacturing sector workers live within its boundaries and have been hard hit by manufacturing job losses following the 2008 recession. Just yesterday, I received a phone call from a constituent whose daughter was laid off by Kellogg's after 30 years in the factory. Now 50 years old, this woman is worried about whether she will be able to find another job at all and how in the world she's going to manage until retirement.

The riding is also home to many retail and service sector workers, now called the new "precariat," who are struggling to make ends meet in low-wage, precarious employment.

As with many urban centres, there is also growing income polarization within the riding. There are areas of great affluence side by side with neighbourhoods made up almost entirely of public housing. My colleague John Vanthof knows something about that. The residents in these complexes face deeply rooted challenges of poverty, ill health and unemployment. I want to thank John for the day he spent canvassing with me.

There are clusters of apartment buildings filled with recent newcomers who face all the challenges involved in settlement and immigrant integration, as well as the barriers to employment created by lack of recognition of their professional skills and educational credentials.

But most of the riding is made up of middle-class neighbourhoods with families who are caught in the dual squeeze of caring for aging parents and raising their children. Too many of these families are seeing their kids graduate from post-secondary education without any prospects for work in London or indeed anywhere in southern Ontario.

As MPP for London West, I'm excited about the opportunity to participate in developing solutions to some of these challenges by applying the research I've been involved in as director of policy at Academica Group. Working in the private sector, in a firm with less than 20 staff, my experience at Academica Group has given me insights into some of the challenges facing the small business community. With much of my research focused on post-secondary education and the labour market, I bring detailed knowledge of issues related to youth employment and transitions from school to work.

For too long, Ontario's approach to bridging students from education to the labour market has been haphazard and inconsistent. For the past three years, I've been leading a multi-phase project for the Higher Education

Quality Council of Ontario, or HEQCO, involving 14 Ontario post-secondary institutions. The project looked at issues around post-secondary work-integrated learning programs, such as co-ops, internships, field placements, practicums and service learning. Using data gathered from employers, faculty and post-secondary graduates, the study is identifying the kinds of supports needed by employers to offer work-integrated learning opportunities to students, and the supports needed by students to enable them to apply their learning to real-world experiences and to critically reflect on their experiences when they return to the classroom.

I've also been working locally with the London Economic Development Corp. and the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board on an innovative local labour market information project that will be launched in the very near future. The project brings together stakeholders from business, education, employment service providers and government and uses best practices identified by the OECD to better utilize skills in the local economy.

I want to mention two other projects I worked on that had great meaning for me and offered policy insights that I will take forward as MPP. One was a study of bridging programs for internationally trained professionals, programs that helped them bridge the gaps in their foreign qualifications and meet the criteria to practise their skills in Ontario. Another was a series of advocacy and awareness initiatives to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities.

In addition to these policy priorities, I am also excited about being able to support some of the incredible things that are happening in London right now that have the potential to transform our local economy, given the right kinds of government and community investments.

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting with people in our community who are truly change agents, along with NDP leader Andrea Horwath and the member from London-Fanshawe. We met with the board of Emerging Leaders, a community-led initiative that is focused on the retention, development and engagement of young people aged 20 to 44, to create a more vibrant, inclusive and dynamic London community.

We also met with representatives from the London Youth Advisory Council, an elected municipal body with the mandate to engage and empower youth and to give young people between the ages of 15 and 25 a voice in building a better city.

Emerging Leaders and the London Youth Advisory Council have launched a campaign urging local employers to hire young people without requiring them to have three to five years of work experience. This recognizes that today's young people are better educated than all previous generations, but are caught in a Catch-22 of "can't get a job without experience" and "Can't get experience without a job."

We also met with representatives of Pillar Nonprofit Network, which works on behalf of more than 300 London non-profits to support cross-sector collaboration

between the private sector, the public sector and civil society groups as a means of addressing poverty, fostering social innovation and increasing the collective impact of non-profit organizations in London.

Pillar is leading an effort to grow the social economy—that is, businesses with a social purpose—which, as we know, is not only a vital component of a dynamic economic development strategy, but is also one of the best ways to create jobs for youth and marginalized workers, while addressing human, environmental and community needs.

0920

I want to thank MPPs on all sides of this House for the warm welcome you have given me since I first arrived in this place, and in particular, my NDP caucus colleagues. I'm looking forward to working with MPPs from all parties, and I've seen some of the consensus that has been achieved when we work hard on legislation to identify some common ground and move forward to achieve common goals. I am committed to putting in place a robust policy framework that will enable the social economy to thrive, ensure that quality health care services are there when people need them, enable seniors to age with dignity in their own homes or in quality long-term-care facilities, and create an inclusive economy which everyone can participate in and benefit from. Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: It really is refreshing, and also hopeful, listening to the member from London West. She obviously is a very dedicated, committed representative of her riding. What's refreshing about what she said is that—too many times in politics, we see people present themselves as candidates, and when I ask them all, "What did you do in your community? What did you do?" "Well, no, I want to be elected." This member from London West obviously has a proven track record of fighting for what she believes in. She's passionate and also very knowledgeable. So I think the people of London West, despite that it's not our party—I think she's going to add a lot to this Legislature, and I think she's going to do a lot of good work for the people of London West, because she has the knowledge, the commitment and the attitude that we're here in this place to find common ground and to get things done for the people of whether it be London West or all of Ontario.

As you know, for too many days in this Legislature—most of the time, sadly, is being spent on playing political games. That does not benefit the people of London West; it doesn't benefit the people of Ontario. As she listed, there are so many issues facing the people of London West, as are facing all of our ridings. The work we've got to do is to get a handle on those issues to benefit the people. I've been here for a number of years, and I can tell you I am still hopeful that we can do a lot of good. There's amazing power in this Legislature to do good. That's what we should be concentrating on. If we can get that kind of attitude demonstrated by the member

from London West and her knowledge—I think there's a lot of beneficial results for the people, whether it be in education, whether it be for people in need. So I want to congratulate the member for her very meaningful speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to first of all congratulate the member for London West on her maiden speech. One of my favourite times in this Legislature is to sit and listen to folks who are new to this place give their perspective and offer their thanks to the voters who entrusted them. I think we all share one thing here: As 107 men and women, we are entrusted by our constituents to represent them, and to represent them well. I think this is an opportunity for us to share a little bit of insight into ourselves, when we provide our maiden speeches, and I got a little bit of an insight on the new member from London West, her background, her experience and some of her interests. But most importantly, I think what we all can aspire to do in this Legislature—is that we're here to represent our constituents. What I heard in the member from London West's speech today is that she intends to do exactly that.

I think that sometimes in the cut and thrust of debate in this Legislature we actually forget a little bit about why we were sent here and who we are here to represent. Each and every day that I stand in my place as the member for Cambridge, I have to remind myself that this is about not myself and not my political party but about the people that I represent. I hope that the member for London West—I think she obviously shares that perspective and shares that commitment to her constituents, much like each member of this Legislature, 107 of us, who had to do the same thing: seek election, do the cut and thrust of debate through that process and finally have the opportunity and privilege to serve in this wonderful, wonderful place.

So I want to congratulate the member from London West on her election and on her contributions to this place and to the debate that we're going to have now and in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am so thrilled and very proud to stand here today and welcome the member from London West, and congratulate her for a wonderful speech. It was very informative and educational, and I learned a lot of things about the member today, more than I have since I met her.

I also want to say that I'm very honoured that she is here, because I know she is going to represent London West constituents 100%. Her dedication and commitment to her job are very well received, and it's very evident that that's what she is here for. She's here to work for the people, and she's here to get results. That's what our party has been doing—since we've been elected in 2011. We're here to make sure that life gets better for the people of Ontario.

I'm also very proud of the fact that the NDP is one of the only parties here in the Legislature—the only one, I

should correct myself—that has almost 50% representation of women. We know that it's very difficult for women to make those decisions to run in politics, because they do have that juggling act of being a mother, a wife, a partner, a career person—and those things are difficult—and it takes a lot of gumption to run for office. I know that women have a difficult time to make that decision, when they're asked to run, but I think the face of politics is better when women are involved.

So again, I say congratulations and welcome to the Legislature. You're a wonderful addition to the team. I know that all the colleagues here in the House—and it sounds like all parties—are very enthusiastic to have you here, and we appreciate that you said “yes” and won the by-election. We look forward to you doing a lot of things in the Legislature for the people of London West.

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

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I would like to begin by also congratulating the member from London West on her maiden speech, and again, like the member for London–Fanshawe said, I learned a lot about you. I'm very impressed by your record of service and the experience you bring. Especially, I did not know that you were a school trustee. That certainly brings a new lens to the debate we are having on the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013. I know that you will be able to bring a wealth of perspective to this, having worked in the trenches in the education sector. So thank you so much and, once again, congratulations. I wish you very well.

I do want to spend a few minutes speaking about Bill 122. At its core, it's very simple: If I'm paying for something, I want to have a say in how it's spent. That's what this is about. This is about giving the province of Ontario, which is the primary funder, in fact the only funder, of public school education, both the Catholic and the public school sectors in Ontario—there is no formal role in bargaining for the province, and that is what this act seeks to do. What it's seeking to do is say that there are three stakeholders in this: There are the employer groups, there are the employee groups, and then there is the funder, which happens to be the province of Ontario.

This is much-required clarity. I mean, we've been at the table in an informal way, and sometimes it has worked and sometimes it hasn't worked. It's important to learn from the past and build on it, and that is what this bill does. So I'm very pleased that we have brought this forward. It's a made-in-Ontario model. It is unique. It is tailored to our special needs, our funding model. It's much needed, and I believe we need to bring it in place before the next round of bargaining within the school system occurs. I look forward to support from all parties.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for London West, you have two minutes.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, the member from Cambridge, the member from London–Fanshawe and the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for the wonderfully kind comments you made. I feel somewhat at a disadvantage,

because you now know all about me and I'm going to have to look through Hansard to find out the same things about you. But many of the comments you made apply equally to everyone in this House. Collectively working together, finding that common ground, we can do good, as the member from Eglinton–Lawrence said, and we can represent our constituents with integrity, with principle and with a commitment to bringing forward the concerns that matter to the people who live in our communities.

0930

I want to acknowledge the comments that were made by the member from London–Fanshawe about the importance of electing women to public office and the obligation that all of us have, as women legislators, to mentor young women and encourage them to recognize that they have a voice, that they have a role to play in public life—because it is challenging for women to want to enter the cut and thrust of politics. It can be intimidating and it may not be an environment that women feel particularly comfortable in.

As the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville said, we all bring incredibly rich and varied experiences and backgrounds to this place. Together, we are making democracy better when we have that exchange of ideas and opinions across the House and work together to do good things for the people of this province.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association / Loi concernant l'Association des professionnels en ressources humaines.

An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 and to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit to farmers for donating certain agricultural products that they have produced / Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux et modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les agriculteurs qui font don de certains produits agricoles qu'ils ont produits.

An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.

An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

An Act to amend the Executive Council Act and the Legislative Assembly Act in relation to accommodation allowances / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en ce qui concerne les allocations de logement.

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE
BARGAINING ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION
COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS
SCOLAIRES

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, at the start, I'd just like to say that I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Labour.

Before I get under way, I want to join with my colleagues in complimenting the member for London West on her excellent maiden speech. We welcome her. She's been a fine member. Her contributions in the Legislature have always been positive and constructive and well-researched ones, and I think this is the kind of member that gives all elected members a good name.

Applause.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you for that thunderous applause.

Speaker, we're here to talk about Bill 122. Bill 122 is a continuing step forward in the evolution of a process, a process to do something that is by its definition very, very difficult. If passed, the legislation would create central tables where government trustee associations and unions or teacher federations could resolve monetary and policy issues in collective free bargaining.

There is some urgency to do this. Virtually all collective agreements in the education sector will expire next year—August 31, 2014.

Now, to put some scope on what I said earlier, that this is a large and complex problem, there are some 472 different collective agreements covering 127,000 full-time-equivalent regular teachers, an unspecified number of occasional teachers and 67,000 unionized support staff. This speaks to the need to be able to approach this very large and very important set of collective bargaining with a much better approach than we've had in the past.

The intent is to have the boards and their unions be able to resolve local issues in free local collective bargaining. If passed, the legislation would create two strike or lockout windows at the provincial level and at the local level. If passed, the legislation would also provide for three-way ratification at the central level by the government of Ontario, trustee associations and unions.

One may ask what entities are involved in this. If passed, the legislation establishes central employee bargaining agents for teachers, who would be encompassed under the following: the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario English Catholic

Teachers' Association and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

Again, if passed, the legislation would establish the following central employer bargaining representatives: l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques, l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association.

This is important because as Ontario has developed, we've also evolved forward in the manner in which we've approached that collective bargaining. Since some 15 years ago, local school boards have had little authority to directly levy taxation and, as such, to generate local funding. However, those same boards have retained sole authority to bargain collective agreements. So it speaks to the essential need for both resources and responsibility in this.

The province provides the funding for the sector but, conversely, has no statutory authority to participate in collective bargaining. As a result, this framework, undertaken with the best intentions of two governments, ours and the one that preceded us, has produced some real confusion about the roles and responsibilities between school boards, between trustee associations and the government.

Under the existing framework, flawed as it was, the government offered three voluntary provincial discussion tables, in 2004, 2008 and 2012. Last year, in 2012, some parties chose not to participate in the provincial discussion table, and it resulted, in August 2012, in the government enacting the Putting Students First Act that, in the end, imposed collective agreements on the education sector.

This was an outcome that no one sought, it was an outcome that no one was happy with, and it's an outcome that, very frankly, this legislation, if enacted, would seek to mitigate by providing a means for the different parties to arrive at reasonable, fair consensus to produce a better-quality collective agreement and, very frankly, one with a better process.

Early in 2013, this year, the government began discussions with the parties to agree to new terms outlined in a series of memoranda of understanding to be appended to the 2012-14 collective agreements.

I'm sure that the Minister of Labour has many more enlightening comments to offer, and I thank you very much for the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak.

I want to thank the member from Mississauga—Streetsville for his comments on this very important bill, Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013.

0940

First of all, Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Education for her commitment and dedication and

extremely hard work on drafting this particular bill. I speak at first hand, given the close proximity in which the Ministry of Labour worked with the Ministry of Education in the whole consultation process with our partners in education and also the labour relations expert board within the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education in crafting this particular bill. There was quite an unprecedented level of close collaboration that went into the drafting of the bill, because we really wanted to make sure that the bill reflects the very balanced labour relations that are the hallmark of labour relations in Ontario, especially under this government over the last 10 years. Therefore, quite an effort and due diligence was put into the consultation phase and then the drafting of this bill to ensure that from a labour relations view, all the key elements that are outlined for a balanced labour relations system in the Ontario Labour Relations Act are maintained and reflected in this bill.

I want to thank the Minister of Education. Not only did she bring her own expertise on this file as a former school board trustee, but she really went out of her way to seek the advice of the Ministry of Labour to make sure that we've got the right balance in this particular bill.

I also want to thank all our education partners—the teachers' federations, the school board associations, the trustee associations—for their hard work and good advice as this bill was crafted, because we wanted to make sure that all partners are working together in getting the right balance, in getting the right piece of legislation, a process that really will help advance our cause of a better education system in Ontario. I feel that this bill really does accomplish that.

Speaker, I think we have spoken often in this House, and it's worth repeating, of the great accomplishments that we have made in education in the last 10 years in our province. It has been a great aspect, a part of the attention of our government, to ensure that education continues to grow and that our children are getting one of the best educations. I want to thank teachers and all our support workers and everybody who works in the education sector for their hard work in getting us where we are today in terms of building one of the best and strongest education systems Ontario has ever had, perhaps, and that the results show Canada has, and making us so competitive around the world. I just look at the results in my community of Ottawa, and specifically my community of Ottawa Centre, the kind of great results that we're seeing in education, the level of education our children are getting, how engaged they are. For me, one of the key issues has always been narrowing the gap between those children who have a lot of the benefits and privileges and those for whom English or French may not be their first language or who are new to our community, new to our province. We are starting to see the narrowing of that gap taking place so significantly that we're really creating a level playing field, we're really making sure that all children in our education system are given equal opportunities to succeed. That has been a great achievement of the investments that our government has been able to make in education over the last 10 years.

Full-day kindergarten alone is making a tremendous impact. I've had the opportunity to speak to many parents, in my community of Ottawa Centre, whose children are going to full-day kindergarten. It's interesting to talk to those parents who have one child who went to a half-day program and one child now going to the full-day program. They will tell you themselves the great difference they're seeing in the development of their children. The child who is going to full-day kindergarten—his or her skill set, his or her competencies in social behaviour, in the learning of different things as a four- or five-year-old is tremendous. Parents know these differences and they are able to share that with you, and it's very heartening to see that.

I've got about 75% of the schools in my community of Ottawa Centre now offering full-day kindergarten, and there is a lot of excitement around that program. In fact, parents in the remaining 25% of schools which will be offering full-day kindergarten in the next academic year ask me often when that is going to happen, because they want the opportunity for their children to be able to attend full-day kindergarten.

Not to mention the kind of investments we've made in making sure that we have good school facilities—in the city of Ottawa alone, since 2003 we have built, renovated or expanded about 40 schools. That is just a tremendous investment, and I thank the Ministry of Education for really having confidence in my community of Ottawa and being able to create a world-class education system, amazing schools and facilities that are giving a whole new, great opportunity for our children to grow.

We want to make sure that those successes continue to grow, and in order for those successes to continue, we need to make sure that we have strong labour relations within our school system, that we remain on the path of strong partnership with our teachers and with our education support workers so that that level of quality of education, that focus on children remains very much part and parcel of our education system. I think that is the real foundation, that is the real glue that makes our education system succeed.

The key element of this particular bill, Bill 122, is to ensure that we have fair and balanced labour relations so that we can continue on that particular path. I'm really proud that our government has worked hard to restore fairness and balance in labour relations over the past 10 years, repairing the relationships that were broken before our government came into office. The result is that 97% of labour contracts in Ontario are now settled without disruptions. That is a remarkable achievement and a record that we need to continue to go on. This bill in particular is a great example of what can be accomplished when parties work together. We want to ensure that Ontario's education system remains one of the best in the world, and our goal is to improve student achievement and well-being and take our education system from great to excellent while ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

As I mentioned earlier, our respective ministries, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education, worked

very closely, and we're really proud at the Ministry of Labour to be able to assist in helping develop a model that is outlined in this particular bill that will work for Ontario's education system and make sure that our children succeed.

Speaker, this proposed legislation is needed to create central tables for collective bargaining with formal rules for the province, trustee associations, school boards, teacher federations and support staff unions. By creating a formal provincial level of bargaining, recognizing the unique roles of each party, this legislation would ensure a stable framework for labour negotiations that will ensure a fair and binding process that is clear to all parties.

So what is this bill trying to do if it is passed? The proposed legislation would create two tiers of bargaining. At the central tier, the government and the trustee associations form a management team to bargain central agreements with unions. At the local tier, the local school boards and their employees would bargain local agreements. So one key, fundamental element of this particular piece of legislation is having two tiers of bargaining, one at the central level, where government is very much part and parcel working along with trustee associations and, of course, then the second tier, which is at a local level, where local school board trustees are negotiating with local teacher federations.

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The second key element of this bill is to create a formal role for the government at the table. The proposed role will allow the government to formulate mandates in partnership with the trustee association and to participate in central bargaining on the key issues. That's a very important step, Speaker, because up to now, as you may know, the government's role was not formalized.

Up to now, the last three rounds of negotiations, if you look at it—when the central bargaining took place, that was totally on a voluntary basis, where the government, as the funder, invited all parties to come around the table and was able to negotiate. That's how the 2004 negotiations were done; that's how 2008 was done. They worked in those two instances. We know that in 2011 we tried to do the same thing, and it did not exactly take shape the way that it did in the first two rounds of negotiations. What we are doing through this bill is formalizing that whole process, central bargaining, and formalizing the role for government as the funder in that negotiating process around the table as well, which is key.

The third thing this bill does is to establish trustee associations as the statutory central employer bargaining agents for each of their respective sectors for the purposes of central bargaining—again, a very important role for trustee associations, making sure that that local voice is present at the central level, working along with the government as a joint management team representing the point of view of the employer.

Lastly, in terms of a key feature of this bill, it's that it creates a three-way ratification of central agreements between the government, trustee associations and unions. In other words, all three parties—the government, trustee

associations and the unions—would have to ratify the agreement in order for it to pass. Again, it's a difference from how the system has worked in the past, where the only two parties to the agreement were the trustee associations—the local school boards, in essence—and the unions. In this case, we're sort of formalizing what has happened, essentially, in the last three rounds of negotiations and making sure that all three parties have a role to play.

Speaker, this model really helps us ensure that there's constructive dialogue and that we're maintaining positive relationships. It really allows for parties to work together—again, keeping in mind that there are balanced labour relations practices that are very much part and parcel of the whole negotiating process. We know through Supreme Court decisions, like the BC health decision and the Fraser decision that emanated out of Ontario, that good-faith bargaining is very much the essence of collective bargaining as a charter right. We have worked hard, working along with the Ministry of Education, to ensure that all those elements—the constitutional elements, the charter requirements through the Supreme Court in terms of having a process that allows for good-faith bargaining—are very much part and parcel of this bill.

I very much encourage all members of this House to vote in support of this particular bill.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: I listened with intent to the Minister of Labour and to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, I believe, who provided some comments on Bill 122. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that if anyone can probably explain the nuances of this bill, being a labour piece of legislation, it would be the Minister of Labour. So I expected him to elaborate on some of the details of this.

He touched upon it, I guess, in the second half of his discussion. But in the first half, I noticed that he didn't really talk about the piece of legislation at all. He talked about full-day kindergarten; he talked about the school system in Ottawa. He talked about many other things that I'm sure the minister agrees are very important to his constituents and to him as a member. But I think the funny part of that, in doing that, is that in talking about the "gains" that the minister was talking about—I mean, all those gains happened before this piece of legislation was formed. So if the justification is to see these gains succeed, I'm not really sure how that fits in nicely or squares nicely with this piece of legislation.

What it does point to is the fact that the minister, much like myself, wants to talk about these things. He wants to talk about full-day kindergarten. He wants to talk about the plight of his schools in Ottawa. He wants to talk about how we can make improvements to our system. So do I, Mr. Speaker. Yet we've had two pieces of legislation, since I've been appointed critic for education, that actually do nothing but talk about process, rather than talk about the kinds of reforms and the kinds of things we can do to improve our education system.

That is, in a nutshell, where I see this is going to go. If I can just see how the comments and questions from the Liberals are going to proceed on this—they're going to talk about their gains, they're going to talk a little bit about the bill, but the two never square up. We really want to improve our schools, and this bill isn't really going to do any of that.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we've stood down our lead and you will be hearing that lead from our education critic, the member from Toronto–Danforth, shortly—I'm sure next week at some point.

Just some general comments about Bill 122: Obviously, as a caucus, we're looking at this, we're talking to stakeholders, we're looking at possible amendments, ways of making it stronger in terms of support. But the elephant in the room, Mr. Speaker, is truly the state of education in this province. It's pretty bleak, quite frankly.

On the post-secondary side, I know we're 10th out of 10 in terms of our investment per capita in our students. We have the highest post-secondary debt. We have the highest tuition fees in the country. That should be something that should shame us daily.

Certainly Bill 115 was more than an embarrassment; it was a direct attack on collective bargaining. That is, of course, what this attempts to rectify.

Also, the chronic underfunding of our schools: Anybody who walks into any school in their riding will see that our schools are—certainly in mine—chronically underfunded. I'm constantly bearing letters from my parents to this administration, begging and pleading for the very basic money they need to keep their schools afloat, and of course they don't get it. That's why parents are raising in excess of \$500 million a year in fundraising just for the basics for their students.

That's the central problem here. That's the core problem of our educational system. It's something that this government really has not addressed now going into their 11th year here at Queen's Park. A government that wanted to see itself as the education government has failed miserably on this file, and Bill 122, whatever its strengths or weaknesses, is absolutely not going to deliver in a way that should be delivered on the educational file.

We'll have more to say on this and the state of our system in the future.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and the Minister of Labour.

The Minister of Labour mentioned schools in Ottawa—and the minister of francophone affairs said, "I really want to talk about the francophone schools in Ottawa and throughout the province," because we notice that there are some of the representatives from the francophone school system. What she wanted to convey

was how proud she is of the wonderful job that the francophone schools both in her riding and throughout the province are doing, and their astoundingly good results on the provincial test results which they have achieved over the last several years. That was from the minister of francophone affairs.

I wanted to comment, in a way, on something that the member from London West said in her maiden speech—because, like me, she has a background as a school board trustee. She talked about her experience with negotiations, and she talked about the fact that bargaining is a matter of give and take; that when bargaining is working properly there's compromise, and the compromise leads to solutions.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Labour and his people for being part of exactly that sort of process which led to the creation of Bill 122—because there was a check-in with the various education partners, both on the management side and the union side, facilitated by the officials from the Ministry of Labour. We worked very closely with different people with different points of view, and I think it's fair to say the unions don't see everything they wanted to see; the school boards don't see everything they wanted to see. Quite frankly, the government has made some compromises too. But it is a compromise.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It is interesting to listen to some of the feedback here on Bill 122.

I'd like to also welcome and thank the member from London West for her inaugural speech this morning. I know how interesting that can be for a member who is new here. She did a great job. Although she's not here right now to hear, I'm sure she'll hear—

Interjection: Send her the Hansard.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Send her the Hansard, yes.

Bill 122, as we know, is a very complicated, technical bill. I happen to come from a labour relations background and understand—I've sat at the negotiation table many times talking to and negotiating with unions in many different circumstances, some of them better than others, and the one thing I do know is that it is extremely difficult to legislate good negotiations. It is a flowing concept that takes a different life every time you do it. Depending on who the group is that you're dealing with, depending on the issues of the day, depending on the people who are being represented by the unions—so many different factors factor in.

My concern with Bill 122 is, trying to do too much and trying to fix too much, and then what are we going to end up with in the future? It might work really well this time. But is it going to work the next time, when we have different problems and different pressures on our economy and we have different pressures on our school systems and we have different pressures on our politics, we have different parties in power? There are so many different factors here that I think could render this bill and this effort kind of moot, so my concerns surround

that. We can't really imprint into time a bill that's going to guide us for the rest of our days. We need to have more flexibility. We need to certainly not have a bill as technical as this—having negotiators at the table hamstrung trying to figure out which direction they're going to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Labour, you have two minutes.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Cambridge, Parkdale–High Park, Barrie and the Minister of Education for their comments, and they were all good comments in terms of what I was saying. I just want to make two specific comments, Speaker, in response. Number one is that the education system is very much premised on people. It's a system that is delivered by people for the benefit of people, i.e. young children. That is why it is extremely important that we have good labour relations in our whole education system—because if we have good labour relations, if we have good working conditions in our schools, you know we will be able to accomplish the goals we have set out in terms of higher student achievement, in narrowing the gap, in making sure that our children are getting the best education possible. If we don't have good working conditions, if we don't have solid labour relations, the aspirations towards those goals become that much more difficult. That is why this bill is very, very important: to make sure that we've got a solid foundation within our school system in terms of labour relations so that we can continue on the path of building one of the best education systems in the world, as we have done over the last 10 years with the incredible investments that we have made in our educational system, in partnership with the education workers.

The second point, to the member from Barrie—I think he raises a very good point: You want to have a system in place that can withstand various other factors that may come over time. We feel very strongly that we have provided for that foundation; that what this bill does is it puts a very rigorous process in place that will allow for good-faith bargaining to take place no matter what the political climate or economic situation may be. That's a very important thing: that you want to have strong principles in place for collective bargaining so that external factors become irrelevant and it allows for a place, an avenue, to engage in that good-faith bargaining and be able to then result in settlements, in agreements that will provide for a better education for our children.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to remind members of the Legislature—and it's a gentle reminder—that we should not be making references to people who are not in their seat.

Secondly, on the questions and comments, we should restrict our comments to the previous speaker, not speakers who have gone by. Thank you very much.

Further debate? The member from Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Speaker. I actually do apologize for making that reference. It was inadvertent and meant in a—

Mr. Rob Leone: It was complimentary.

Mr. Rod Jackson: —in compliments rather than the negative.

I already mentioned briefly, in my last two minutes, my concerns with this bill and the fact that I am worried that it has flexibility when we go forward.

As I said before, I've had the opportunity to be involved in many negotiations with large unions and some large companies, seeing these things go many different ways, and it is really interesting. Part of the dynamic of a labour negotiation system is the fact that they have the ability to move in different directions, and, in many cases, with little guidance from anyone else other than people at the table.

My concern is, with a bill as technical as this—and in many cases trying to understand it—it adds more difficulty to a system that needs less. When we add a tier of negotiation here, it really does concern me a little bit that more isn't going to be better, in this case. I always find, especially when you add a tier into a negotiation, you have more people and more confusion about direction, about who's going where.

I know that every school board in Ontario, and indeed every school board in Canada, has much different pressures on it than on the others. For example, the Toronto District School Board is going to have a much different scale of capacity and certainly much different interests than, say, a school board in far northern Ontario, and they're going to need a much different set of standards and ideas and dialogue at the table. Those are often best addressed at the local level. Those local people know what their local needs are.

I'm not saying this can't work, but I'm also saying that we need to be very careful that we don't try to steer the ship from this building. That can do more damage than good, in many cases. But at the same time, sometimes there needs to be a little bit of guidance, I think, to make sure that we keep things going.

We've found, certainly, that the roles of different parties in collective bargaining in the education sector, and the voluntary framework that we've had, have run into some problems, and that's why we've come down this road to this bill and some of the issues over Bill 115 and politicizing, in many ways, the negotiation process. I think we've seen how that can really damage relationships between those that are negotiating on both sides. It is something that needs to be clarified.

For me, clarity means keeping it simple. All of us have learned from our high school teachers the KISS rule: Keep it simple, stupid. It's something that we all need to live by, really. The simpler we keep it, the better it is, in many cases. I worry that this complicates something that doesn't really need to be as complicated as it is.

We also believe that when you have a piece of legislation like this that is recognizing some of the difficulties that have happened in the past, it is very advantageous, if we have something like a sunset clause involved in this legislation, that we'll actually be able to look back at it and say, "We were able to put some legislation in this year that helped us with the problems we had this year to address some problems from the past. But do you know

what? In the future, we're going to see this going a different way."

If a sunset clause was included in this legislation, I think it would highly benefit not only all the people who are at the negotiating table on both sides; I think the kids of this province are going to benefit from that too, because we know that their needs change on a very regular basis.

I know the Minister of Labour was mentioning that this is something that will benefit all the people at the table and that we've got to remember what the focus is on here. Something that struck me as interesting is: Right away, I thought, "Of course, he's going to say 'the kids.'" It wasn't the first thing out of his mouth, which I found a little bit disturbing. What we really are doing this for, what we really want to achieve with any bill to do with education, is the welfare of our children, the welfare of their education.

I have two young kids; one is 12 and one is 10. They're both in our school system. They have fantastic teachers who do a great job. I was able to speak with their teachers, actually, the day before yesterday. They do an amazing job, and they're very happy with it.

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I've also become very aware of a local family who have some severe issues with the education system, because their child has some special needs. It's interesting to me because this young man is actually a friend of my son's. I had no idea he had any sort of special needs, and he does. I fear for this child, because there's nothing in place in this integrated system that we have for children with many different special needs—and there are many different types of them—to accommodate him. He's at the point now where he has had these special needs—when they were diagnosed for a couple of months last year, after he'd been admitted to Sick Children's Hospital down here in Toronto to take care of them. When he went back to school, he was given an education assistant to help him throughout his day, to maintain his health, and when he was in that position, he did well in school, he was doing well socially; all these sorts of different things he was doing really well in. Well, at the end of the year, they told him he wasn't going to have access to his education assistant when he came back to school in September.

So here we have a child that we know can have the tools to succeed if we actually focus on that, if we focus on giving him the tools he needs to bring his potential out to be the next MPP, to be the next doctor or lawyer or tradesperson in our community. Right now, this child's parents are worried that he's going to get lost, slip through the cracks and end up back at SickKids fighting for his life.

This is something that, it seems to me, is very simple, but it's not being addressed by either the school board or the ministry, and it's one example of many that I know that are out there. We talk about the victory of integrating our kids into our education system, and there are some success stories, but in many cases we're failing them. We're failing them because we don't have the right

resources on the front lines of our education system to be able to give them the results that they need to have, and it's a shame. It's not a reflection on the staff who are there; in fact, I believe the staff who are working with these kids, the EAs and the teachers—and if the government was listening, they might get something out of this—actually need more resources. We need to focus on their training, we need to focus on how many of them there are, and even the money.

The distribution of the money that's going into the education system is appalling. In fact, in Barrie alone, in the Simcoe county district school system, spending increased year over year for the past several years, with a decreased enrolment. So we're spending more money, less kids going to the school, and yet science programs are being cut at local high schools, schools shut down and a Taj Mahal—if you've ever visited the Simcoe County District School Board and been to that building, it's nicer than this one. It is absolutely beautiful. It's a Taj Mahal school board office. Instead of putting a new HVAC system into a school in the heart of downtown Barrie, they replaced the one in the almost brand new school board building. It is quite amazing that the priorities there didn't match up—and at the same time we're cutting science classes, cutting music classes. Schools are being shut down in Barrie, in the heart of our downtown, which is the heartbeat and the lifeblood of any city, and then we focus on the backend stuff.

This whole bill is focusing on labour relations with teachers, which I think needs to be focused on—we need to talk about this stuff—but not to the detriment of dealing with the front-line issues that our kids deal with.

In fact, my wife is president of the parent-teacher council of our school, and the amount of work that parents do to keep those schools open, the amount of money they raise for athletic equipment and for landscaping and for signs is amazing. The amount of effort that the parents put into this is great, and thank God we have parents who are willing to put forth their effort and time, away from their jobs in many cases, and sacrifice what they do to get the job done.

It would be really great if this government would focus on those sorts of front-line things too and keep those science classes open and keep some of those great schools in the cores of our cities open so that we can attract more people to live in the places that we need them to live in in our cities, which is in the middle of them, not on the outskirts of them, especially in a city like Barrie.

It's something we need to really focus on in the big picture—and make sure that we focus on children with special needs. We spent years, since the 1970s, integrating these kids into our system so they could live integrated, productive lives in our communities, and they're not. They've been integrated, but they're not being given the right potential and the right tools to be able to succeed—

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome in the House today a group of women who are visiting Hamilton as part of the women's exchange program of Canada World Youth. They come from Nicaragua, Honduras and various communities across Canada. Please help me welcome—and bear with me—Carmen Acunia, Deema Sierra, Ena Rodriguez, Grisselda Hernandez, Gyneska Velaski, Judith Gutiérrez, Karen Nenio, Krystal Alicia Bell, Maria Urbina, Mirian Bermudez—they're going to hate me after this, Speaker—Neweme Lowhando, Nubia Melara, Teanna Ducharme, Ambar Deras, Karen Molina and Kelsey Pinch.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I call members' attention to the members' east gallery. It's my pleasure to introduce a very good friend and my mentor, former Mississauga North MPP Steven Offer, on the day that both of us have served 10 years and 37 days in the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce my new legislative assistant, Sara Cleland.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's my pleasure today to welcome Mr. David Tanovich, who is with us in the gallery. David teaches law at the University of Windsor, but, more importantly, he's the father of page Evan Tanovich. Welcome, David.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the family of page Arianna Dossa—mother, Dinar Dossa; father, Farid Dossa; and younger sister Hannah Dossa—to the Legislature today, from the great riding of Pickering-Scarborough East. Welcome.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's my pleasure to introduce page Phoebe Gao from my riding of Carleton-Mississippi Mills. Her parents are here today in the members' gallery: Xiang Sun, Wei Gao—and her brother Leo Gao.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to introduce page Aiden Wong's mother, Samantha, and his sister Holly Wong, from Richmond Hill, visiting the House.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to introduce, in the gallery, Carol Jolin, representing AEFO, which is the francophone teachers of Ontario. Welcome, Carol.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: It's my pleasure this morning to welcome Haicen Zhang and Yali Liu, the father and friend of today's page captain, Christina Zhang from Windsor West. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce, in the gallery, Jeff Mole, who is a community energy planning consultant. I understand he's here to meet with several MPPs today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the tradition of the House, I would like to welcome to the members' gallery Mr. Steve Offer, former MPP for Mississauga North in the 33rd, 34th and 35th Parliaments, and Solicitor General for the 34th Parliament. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. It looks like my question will be for the Acting Premier this morning.

You hired Don Drummond to map the way out of the financial mess that you got us into. He told us that to balance the budget will require "tough decisions," and "most of the burden must fall on spending."

Now we understand that your plan is to shift the focus from restraint and go on a spending spree. Any family having trouble paying their bills knows that you don't run out and buy a swimming pool. What you're proposing over on that side is absolutely preposterous. You're using your MasterCard to pay off your Visa and your Visa to pay off your MasterCard. How do you expect people to believe you can balance the budget by 2017-18?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the Premier has said on many occasions, we are implementing Drummond's recommendations. In fact, we've implemented 60% of them.

What is absolutely preposterous is when they stand up and say, "Implement Drummond; implement Drummond," and then when we do implement Drummond, they oppose us every single step of the way.

At the Ministry of Health, we made changes to physio; you objected to that every step of the way. We worked to bring down the price of drugs; you objected every step of the way. We had tough negotiations with physicians; you objected every step of the way. You've got to choose a lane.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: That's rich, considering this government added \$20 billion to our debt this year alone—just this year. When Moody's downgraded you, they also said that if you don't stabilize the debt burden, you will risk another credit downgrade.

You say you're going to spend and grow your way to balance, but the Bank of Canada just two weeks ago told us that Ontario will not meet our growth projections for this year, or for the next. You're not fooling anyone.

We're not the only ones who have seen through this fiscal facade. Yesterday, the revered Wall Street Journal reported that Ontario's fiscal situation is worse than California's, and the province will have trouble hitting its deficit target. And that's before your new spending announcement of yesterday.

Acting Premier, will you please tell us: Is the Wall Street Journal wrong in their forecast?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's pretty clear that there's a real difference between the opposition party and ourselves because, do you know what, Speaker—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They have chosen to focus everything on reaching that zero deficit. We have chosen to grow the economy. We have chosen jobs. We believe

that the way to economic strength, the way to balance, is through growth, through jobs, through prosperity. We're still on track to balance, but I tell you, our Holy Grail is investing in our people, investing in our infrastructure and having a dynamic, thriving business community.

They only thing they care about is the deficit; we're not like that.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The Wall Street Journal isn't the only respected outlet who's not buying this line from you, Acting Premier. The Globe and Mail, this week, called your plan to encourage corporate investment "equal parts lunacy, desperation and a return to failed 1970s-style state planning." That's the Globe and Mail. The Globe also said, "There is a very clear sense in which the Ontario government is playing 'blame the victim' for the sorry state of the provincial economy"—not your own problem. These are hardly ringing endorsements; they're condemnations.

Now is not the time to play riverboat gambler with Ontario's finances. We need real leadership to return to prosperity.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Will you admit that you're in over your head and you just are not up to this job?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did not get attention for you to start.

Acting Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our priority is clear. We're focused on creating great jobs, attracting great jobs, and we're focused on helping support middle-class families and protecting key services. That's our priority.

What people like the members opposite don't understand is that achieving that zero deficit is—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —no victory if it means that people don't have jobs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

New question.

1040

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question, as well, is to the Deputy Premier.

Yesterday, the Liberals survived a Progressive Conservative motion on the gas plants—thanks again to the NDP for sitting on their hands, abstaining and choosing, of course, the Liberal Party over the people of Ontario.

Together, the NDP and the Liberals have accomplished a great deal together. They doubled the debt in the past 10 years to \$270 billion. They ran a \$12-billion deficit. They voted to ensure that the horse racing industry would be destroyed in Ontario. They're keeping one million Ontarians from being gainfully employed. And there's one other thing that they've done together: They have found the OPP—in order to have investigations into the gas plant scandal and into the Ornge fiasco.

This marriage between the Liberals and the NDP has been utterly catastrophic for the people of Ontario. Will the Deputy Premier pull her party out of a coalition with the NDP and actually face the people and get a mandate for themselves?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, our Premier has made it very clear that we are working very hard to find common ground. The voters of this province sent a minority government to Queen's Park, and we are working to make minority government work. That means working with the opposition party sometimes. It means working with the NDP sometimes.

Our job is to make this government work, and that means working with both opposition parties so we can continue to improve the lives of the people in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, this Liberal government only survives because of the help of the NDP. That's why we have a high jobless rate. It's why we have a high deficit. It's why we have a high debt. It's why we have disastrous energy policies—all aided and abetted by the NDP.

But the \$1.1-billion scandal with the gas plants in Oakville is exactly what the Ontario public is the most angry about. They can't understand why this Liberal government sat in its place for two years and said the cancellation was only \$40 million when that party over there knew for over two years that it would be over \$700 million, close to a billion dollars, which it finally rang into. They also can't understand why the Premier of the province handed over bargaining rights to TCE and why they obstructed the Information and Privacy Commissioner and chose the more expensive location. But we know that we are all on the hook for a \$1.1-billion tab.

Will the Liberals finally start to listen to the people of Ontario and seek a mandate from them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member will know, speaking of the Oakville gas plant, that the Premier initiated the Auditor General. The Auditor General did her work. She came in and she provided a report.

Mr. Speaker, what is important is that we're moving forward. That's why we're taking action to ensure that electricity bills remain affordable for ratepayers:

—number one, the Clean Energy Benefit;

—most importantly, rescheduling the Samsung agreement, saving \$3.7 billion over the life of the contract;

—changing the domestic content rules in the feed-in tariff program, saving ratepayers more than \$1.9 billion over the life of the contracts;

—deferring the construction of two new nuclear reactors at Darlington generating station, avoiding an estimated \$15 billion in new construction costs.

These are decisions we made over the last seven or eight months. They're making a significant difference. We're pushing the cost curve down, and this member should get with the new agenda—

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, only a party that has a \$12-billion deficit would say they're overachieving. Only a party that blew \$1 billion would have the audacity to look at the taxpayers and say they are saving them money.

This is a Premier who is leading her party and who has not been elected by the people. Amid this \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal, she has refused to call a judicial inquiry. She has refused to call a want of confidence motion. And her staff obstructed the Information and Privacy Commissioner, an officer of this assembly, from doing her job.

Stephanie Delorme, of Ottawa–Vanier, wrote to the Premier. She said: “My eight-year-old son was agog at the idea a billion dollars was spent, but nothing was constructed, nothing was gained...Even he concluded that a billion dollars could buy a lot of stuff for our communities.

“I am asking you to be more of a grown-up—more of a citizen than a politician—and have the guts to face your consequences. My eight-year-old—”

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

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: That member should have the guts to deal with her leader's position on the gas plant. We have here a quote from Mayor Rob Burton.

“On October 5, 2011, on the day before the provincial election, in front of the still under construction Mississauga power plant, PC leader Tim Hudak promises to stop the power plant if he wins the election, after only days before warning that he's sure it ‘may cost another \$1 billion.’ Later, in 2013, he insists it was irresponsible for then-Premier McGuinty to have cancelled it ‘without knowing what it would cost,’ even though it cost far less than Hudak says he thinks it” would have cost when he himself promised to cancel it. “This is a new height in hypocrisy, even for him.”

That's an exact quote, Mr.—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Regardless of whether he is reading or not, the member cannot say that. Withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I withdraw, Speaker.

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

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontarians want to see Ontario's books balanced in a responsible manner. The government signed a plan to open a new corporate tax loophole to help Ontario's larg-

est corporations write off the HST on expenses like winning and dining of clients. Under pressure from the NDP, the government agreed this was a \$1.1-billion expense that Ontarians couldn't afford in tough times.

When will the government permanently close this loophole, or has it abandoned it altogether?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, we are absolutely committed to be responsible when it comes to managing the province's finances. In fact, last year, spending was down. Spending was down last year for the first time since 1996. On the health care file, we've gone from annual increases of 6% to 7% per year to 2% per year, and the health sector understands that that's the way it's going to be for the foreseeable future.

We are transforming how we're doing business so that we can actually be responsible fiscally and continue to improve services that people so heavily rely on. I think that if the member opposite actually paid attention to the books, he would understand that we're being extremely responsible. We're taking our responsibility seriously, but we're not going to cut services. We're not going to slash services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I asked a sensible question. I got a whole bunch of stuff and nothing to do with my question at all. So I'm going to try a different tack; maybe you can answer this one.

Last fall, the government indicated that they were prepared to put a hard cap on public sector CEO salaries that have climbed into the seven-figure range. When will the government take that action, or is this yet another plan the Liberals plan to abandon?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No, Speaker. In fact, we are looking at the issue of broader public sector executive compensation, because I think all of us understand that we need to have a responsible approach to executive compensation in the broader public sector. But I think the member opposite realizes that that is not a panacea; that is not the big fix. In fact, in the health care sector, the issue around hospital CEO compensation amounts to 0.03% of the budget. Yes, it's something we're looking at, but we're realistic enough to know that it's not going to fix everything.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Again, no one says it's going to fix everything, but the Liberals promise things and don't deliver. I'll try a third tack.

Families have seen the government waste over a billion dollars scrapping private power deals. They blow millions on perks and excesses at Ornge and eHealth. They break promises of restraint at the top and dump billions of dollars more into new corporate tax loopholes that aren't creating jobs. Why should anyone take the government seriously when it comes to balancing Ontario's books?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I think I would simply beg to differ with the member opposite

because, in fact, we are making great progress when it comes to jobs. We have done far better than recoup the losses that we had during the great recession. We're continuing to improve outcomes for the people in this province, whether it's health outcomes or whether it's educational outcomes.

1050

We're creating jobs. We're very focused on creating jobs. Our youth employment strategy has already demonstrated that with concerted effort, in partnership with broader society, we can put young people to work. We can put people to work because they're skilled and they're talented. We need to work together to get this economy really moving, to benefit all of us.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. For more than 10 years, Liberals have been cutting no-strings-attached blank cheques to businesses that aren't creating jobs. Does the Acting Premier still think no-strings-attached giveaways are the way to create jobs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have been in a position to support business in this province, because that is where jobs are created. We are prepared to work with the business community so they can create more jobs for the people of this province.

I think we have seen some excellent success when it comes to our investment in GM, for example. There are other very good examples of success, and I think the member actually knows that, because she lives in a community that has benefited from those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Acting Premier: Actually, the region of Kitchener–Waterloo is successful in spite of this government.

Interjections.

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

Carry on.

Ms. Catherine Fife: In 2011, Navistar in Chatham shut its doors, and 1,000 people lost their jobs. This government cut Navistar a \$30-million cheque, but apparently didn't get a guarantee to keep jobs in Ontario. Navistar moved those jobs to a state with a job creator tax credit, something proposed by New Democrats.

Later this month, there is going to be an auction at the Navistar plant. Will Ontarians get any of that \$30 million back?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to have the opportunity to talk about some of the investments through the southwestern Ontario economic development fund, some of them very close to the member opposite's hometown.

Let's talk about what's happening in Elmira. Elmira Pet Products got a grant and created 25 jobs and retained another 146 jobs, for a total of 171.

Linamar in Guelph received a grant; 51 new jobs were created and they retained 374. In Palmerston, \$250,000

went to MSW Canadian Plastics Inc.; they created nine new jobs and retained 21 jobs. In Woodstock, NASG Canada created 50 jobs and retained 210.

This investment is working and creating jobs.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Another non-answer. People are ready to hear new promises today, but they also remember this government's track record. Over the last 10 years, 300,000 good manufacturing jobs have disappeared. Our province has the highest electricity rates in the country, the lowest productivity growth and an unemployment rate that is above the national average.

The government says their old jobs plan is working, even while they try and roll out a new one. Are Ontarians ever going to hear a credible jobs plan from this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I don't know why the member opposite is so darned negative. Let me tell you that we acknowledge the economy still faces challenges. We know that. But she might want to know that employment is up by 475,600 jobs since our low in June 2009. We are on the right track. We are creating jobs; we are retaining jobs.

We believe in the people of this province. We believe they are talented people. We're going to continue to work with the people of this province, because we believe that that's the strength of our future.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Acting Premier. We've heard testimony at the justice committee from the auditor and from senior officials in the Ontario Power Authority that your government was made aware of the costs of the Oakville power plant cancellation months before the Premier appeared before the committee.

Your claims to not have known simply aren't credible. Cabinet was made aware and the Premier was made aware. She knew that the costs were going to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, but that's not what she told the public and that's not what she told this House. Yesterday afternoon, we debated a motion that gave all members of this House an opportunity to hold her accountable for her actions, and the NDP sat on their hands.

My question to the Acting Premier is simply this: What secret deal have you made with the NDP to buy their silence?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. This is skating on very thin ice when you pose a question in a manner that impugns whether or not somebody is paying somebody. So I'm going to offer you an opportunity to resist any further reference to such.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The temptation is there with the ridiculous question that's just been asked, and I'm not going to fall for it because, you know what, Mr. Speaker? This is serious. It is very serious that the opposition, over the past several months, has stood up day after day after day, outlining the situation with the gas plants as being one of the most serious issues before the province, and yet they fail to acknowledge the fact that in the last election they were the ones out front—their candidates—their leader was saying that the only way to see the gas plants cancelled is to elect a PC government in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, it is time they came clean. The issues the member raised this morning have all been dealt with at committee. The Premier will go in front of committee. But the one issue that has not been raised is their commitment to cancel the plants, their costing and their analysis, and it's time they came clean. This is a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Acting Premier: We know that the Liberals are willing to do anything to cling to power, and the NDP are steadfast in their commitment to prop them up. If the Premier can be allowed to waste over \$1 billion without any consequences, what is to prevent even greater scandals from happening in the future? You've had nine months, and all you've done is attempt to get back that union support. Today's economic plan, your so-called jobs plan, proves you're doing everything you can to get that union support back from the NDP. Rumour has it that donations to the Liberals are up and donations to the NDP are down.

This government is responsible for scandal after scandal and will excuse itself for doing anything. The Premier has held no one accountable, and yesterday the NDP turned their backs on Ontarians by refusing to hold the Premier accountable. When will you finally do the right thing and let the people of Ontario pass their judgment on this corrupt, tired old government?

Interjections.

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

The member will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we have tried, with some success, to make this government work. It is true that we brought forward a budget. We reached out to both parties—the PC Party refused to even read the budget, but yes, we reached an agreement with the New Democratic Party. In terms of the PC Party, quite recently we had a programming motion passed in this Legislature which allowed a number of very important pieces of legislation to move forward through committee and through to third reading.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to make this Legislature work, but I ask the honourable members opposite to

continue to show willingness. Right now, Bill 105, which is going to cut taxes for small business, is stalled in committee because of the machinations of the opposition.

Let's continue that spirit of co-operation. Let's continue to make this Legislature work.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Acting Premier. The people of Windsor and Essex county have faced terrible uncertainty and anxiety when it comes to access to cancer surgery as well as thoracic services in our home community.

New Democrats have been asking for clarity and assurance from this government for a full week, but all we're hearing from the minister is spin. She has made it clear that she no longer wants Windsor to provide thoracic services, but the member from Windsor West has been evading the issue and implying that she supports thoracic services in Windsor. So can the Acting Premier come clean and tell us what the Liberal government's position is on Windsor's thoracic services today?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the people of Windsor that they will continue to have access to first-class cancer services, and anything suggesting that they won't is simply fearmongering. They will receive those services in Windsor.

The member from Windsor West and I actually met this morning with Michael Sherar, the CEO of Cancer Care Ontario, so that we could have a further conversation about this particular situation. I think it's commendable that the member from Windsor West would take the time to understand the issue, to advocate for her community, and her commitment to quality of care is paramount.

We know that there is a relationship between volume of surgeries and quality of care. Cancer Care Ontario has driven quality improvement in cancer care that has benefited all Ontarians, and we'll continue to work on this issue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: This government is all too happy to put out contradictory statements and to provide empty assurances, but the grim reality of the situation continues. Windsor and Essex county residents are faced with the loss of thoracic services under the threat of losing all cancer surgeries. Just yesterday, the CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital told the media that the threat from Cancer Care Ontario has yet to be withdrawn, and the hospital's concerns about the loss of thoracic services have not been addressed either.

So will the Acting Premier let my constituents know if her government is done playing games and is ready to take action to protect Windsor's health care services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Absolutely, Speaker. I am committed to excellent care for the people of Windsor and area, as I am for every other part of this province. I think it's very important that the member opposite understand that the \$6 million-plus that is received by the

Windsor hospitals from Cancer Care Ontario will continue. That funding will continue because people in Windsor and area count on that funding to get the cancer care that they need.

So we are continuing, as I said, to work on the issues specific to one type of surgery, but cancer care services will absolutely continue in Windsor, and for the member opposite to suggest otherwise is simply irresponsible.

EDUCATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is to the Minister of Education. I know that Ontario's publicly funded education system is recognized as one of the best in the world, and I'm extremely proud of our accomplishments, as our success is based on the talent, dedication and hard work of those in our education community.

We have a lot to be proud of. Today, 71% of students are achieving the provincial standards in grades 3 and 6 combined, which is up 17 points from 54% in 2002-03, and graduation rates are up 15 points from 2003, to 83% in 2013.

While we have seen great progress over the last 10 years, I know we can't become complacent with this success. I was pleased to hear that the minister recently visited Ottawa to talk about the next phase of education in our province. Can the minister please update this House on the consultations you have been holding?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for raising this initiative. We do have a lot to be proud of when it comes to our accomplishments in education, and now is the time to build on that success and redefine our vision, aspirations and our goals, not just for the system but, more importantly, for our students.

I was pleased to be able to travel to Ottawa recently to participate in our provincial consultation on how to take our education system from great to excellent. I've also had the pleasure of travelling to Thunder Bay, Sudbury, London, Richmond Hill and Mississauga recently to hear directly from parents and our partners in education.

We're asking questions about: What skills do students need to thrive in the 21st century? How do we support student well-being? How can we make better use of technology in our schools? And we have a host of more questions that will help direct our vision for education in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you to the minister for bringing us up to speed on the next phase of consultations.

I agree that it is important for us to continue to look forward on how we can take our system from great to excellent. We are already recognized globally as having one of the best publicly funded education systems in the English-speaking world. We need to continue to work and strive for the best for our students.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister describe to this House what she hopes to learn from these consulta-

tions and when we will finalize this next phase for education in Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you again for the question. It's important to note that this consultation has been a broader check-in than just with our usual education stakeholders. We've been talking, as well, to business, to chambers of commerce, to non-profit agencies and communities throughout the province, and to our students and to our parents. We're talking about how to improve in areas like critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and communication skills, all skills you need for a variety of jobs in our province. We're talking about whether we should be teaching students more about entrepreneurship and financial literacy—what does that mean? What's the role of technology in our classrooms of the future? So this really is a broad range of topics, with a whole host of people from every community.

We are looking forward to the release of a new vision early in 2014.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Minister, yesterday in estimates committee, I asked your colleague the Minister of Transportation when we could expect to see the transit plan for the Pan Am Games. I have to say, his response was quite interesting. Your colleague said that we might get the plan in the next few weeks, but they won't really have a clear picture of the costs until the games are finished. That begs the question: Why even have a budget? If your strategy for the Pan Am Games is just to endlessly bill the taxpayers, why even make the budget? The sad thing is, given the Minister of Transportation's comments and your record, whatever numbers come out of the Pan Am Games transit plan will have no credibility.

Minister, do you agree with the Minister of Transportation? Do you also have no clue what the Pan Am Games transit plans are going to cost?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. As you know, the Pan Am Games are a huge undertaking by the province. Come 2015, there will be 41 countries' competitors coming to Toronto. The games will attract, according to the CIBC, about 350,000 tourists coming to our town.

The Minister of Transportation and TO2015 are leading the development of an integrated transportation plan for the games. Transportation planning for an event of this scale is complex. It takes time and involves many organizations, including the province, municipalities, transit systems and security planning. We are working very closely with the OPP and municipal police to ensure that transportation will be safe and secure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games as well. Minister, you can't keep using complexity as an excuse for not having a budget. It's precisely why you need a budget. Even

your own colleague seemed to throw you under the bus for the Pan Am transportation budget, in estimates yesterday. Apparently, you won't have transportation costs figured out until after the games—very perplexing.

Let me remind you: The value of having a real budget ahead of time is to ensure that the people who are paying for the games are being respected, and that you're being accountable. Therein lies the second problem, Minister: None of your Pan Am budgeting to date is credible. Any time you need more money, you just bury it in another ministry. Your game of misdirection is over.

I want to know how much is buried in transportation and in any other ministry. Minister, will the Pan Am transportation plan be another hidden extra, above and beyond the \$1.4-billion decoy Pan Am budget?

Hon. Michael Chan: The transportation master plan that will guide our operations as we prepare for the games is on track. Past games have reviewed their transportation plans 12 to 18 months before they are under way, and we plan to match that timeline.

We are also working together on an integrated stakeholder outreach and engagement plan, which will be used to guide transportation-related communications to all stakeholders.

1110

Transportation costs have not been fully defined. The games are the first time the province has undertaken a transportation planning exercise of this magnitude. The costs will be identified as the transportation planning process is completed and the full scope of the transportation needs is better understood.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is to the Acting Premier. Nuclear officials are preparing to transport a toxic stew of liquid bomb-grade uranium by armed convoy from Chalk River, Ontario, to a South Carolina reprocessing site. This so-called high-priority mission marks the first time that authorities have attempted to truck highly enriched uranium in a liquid solution.

This announcement has alarmed nuclear safety groups on both sides of the border, and they're sounding the alarm for far greater government scrutiny. What safeguards has this government put in place to protect Ontario residents from this potentially dangerous practice?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member will know that nuclear safety is the responsibility of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. It is 100% responsible. It provides the oversight and accepts the responsibility for it. We work very closely with that agency when we're asked to, and the member should know that.

He's raising concerns. I will pass those concerns on to my federal counterpart. I'm sure, like in every other case when the NDP has raised concerns about the transportation of nuclear products, that they have been properly dealt with and no incidents have occurred from them. The record is impeccable, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the Acting Premier: This government has to understand that there are grave public safety issues at stake here, and the trucking of nuclear waste through our communities requires proper government oversight.

In August, a truck with radioactive cargo on the busy I-75 highway near Troy, Ohio, caught fire, but despite the fire emergency, nuclear regulators in Canada, where the cargo originated, and in the US were not informed of the incident.

Will this government provide hard evidence that the transport of liquid uranium poses no danger to the public and ensure that local officials are given advance notification of the transport of nuclear waste through their region?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Nuclear safety is a top priority for Ontario, and it has been for the 40 or 50 years that we've been in the business. Nuclear power has been safely providing electricity in the province for 40 years. Most importantly, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and Transport Canada are responsible for issuing transport licence applications related to nuclear materials in accordance with stringent regulations for compliance in connection with public safety and emergency preparedness.

As the federal regulator, the CNSC would not allow the transportation of any equipment or material if they were a risk to the public or the environment. The type of incident he's referring to in the United States has not occurred in Ontario, and it won't, Mr. Speaker.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, l'honorable Mario Sergio.

It's my view, as I meet more and more of my constituents in Etobicoke North, that the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat will have an ever-expanding mandate. Unfortunately, in the society that we live in, this more and more often involves elder abuse—mental, physical, even financial.

The WHO defines abuse of older adults as "a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring in any relationship where there's an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person."

The reality is this: Seniors are often the victims of fraud. They tend to be trusting and generous individuals, which of course can make them prey to fraudsters.

Given the minister's role at the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, I would like to know personally and I would like Ontarians to know what actions our government is taking to protect our seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Je suis très heureux de répondre à la question de mon collègue le membre d'Etobicoke-Nord.

Indeed, it's very timely that this question comes at this particular time. Our seniors are not only trusting and

generous but very giving as well. I have to say that, thanks to the contributions they have made, our country, our province and our communities are much better off today.

Shielding, safeguarding and protecting our seniors is my responsibility and that of the government and every member of the House. We introduced legislation to combat elder abuse, to raise awareness and to educate as well. We've injected more than \$8 million since 2003, including the bill of rights for seniors and zero tolerance as well. More than that, let me say that in the next few days, on November 11, we have an extra reason to remember our seniors: those brave men and women who fought in the Second World War and the Korean War so we can enjoy our freedom today.

When it comes to our seniors, we can never do enough. We will continue to do everything we can for the safety and protection of our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I appreciate the response, diligence and heartfelt commitment of the minister in this portfolio.

As a physician and parliamentarian, I am seeing more and more elder abuse in my various capacities. I believe that for my riding of Etobicoke North, there is, however, a certain degree of reassurance to know that the province understands the importance of combatting elder abuse and that the machinery of government is mobilized in this regard. Seniors—their contribution, their hard work, their collective wisdom are all precious resources.

Even so, sadly, many seniors are taken advantage of financially even by their own family members. How is Ontario working with other Canadian jurisdictions to alert seniors about financial fraud, whether it comes from friend or foe?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have to say that the member from Etobicoke North is a real champion and he's a remarkable member when it comes to our seniors. I have to say that the question couldn't come at a better time, when we are celebrating National Senior Safety Week throughout Canada. The theme, in fact, is, fight fraud and protect our seniors' finances.

I have to say that a couple of weeks ago I had the pleasure of participating with members from all the federal, provincial and territorial ministries with respect to raising the issues of seniors. I am very proud, as an Ontarian and a minister of the province of Ontario, to bring forth to the table and get approved a brochure with respect to powers of attorney and joint bank accounts.

I have to say that when it comes to our seniors in the province of Ontario: Here, there are no boundaries. I hope that goes for every member of the House.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, tomorrow will be the 10th day since you promised to respond to Kimm Fletcher about the crisis that she and her family face. That means that

another 10% of her medically predicted life expectancy has gone by while you have continued to do nothing.

Minister, yours is a sacred trust, one that you choose to ignore when it comes to highly vulnerable individuals like Kimm, who look to you as their last resort and their court of final appeal. So today I'm taking the matter directly to the people of Ontario and I'm issuing a province-wide petition on Kimm's behalf. The question is, Minister, will you at least now act on that sacred trust and respond to the voice and the will of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite and everyone else in this province that I take my responsibility as Minister of Health extremely seriously. I know that people are counting on me to do my job well so they can get the health care they need when they need it.

Interjection.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite continues to heckle. I find that disgusting, frankly.

I think it's important that the member opposite understands that when it comes to funding cancer drugs, we have tripled funding for cancer-fighting drugs. For every \$1 they spend, we are spending \$3.

We are blessed in this province to have excellent cancer care. We have amongst the highest survival rates in the world. We have those results because we rely on science to make our decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That increased spending isn't helping Kimm, is it?

Minister, the petition I'm releasing today concludes:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and the Minister of Health to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible and to tell the Wynne administration that our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher."

Again, I ask you, Minister, why doesn't your health care system include Kimm Fletcher?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In my health care system, people get access to the drugs they need based on their condition, not based on an MPP they might know. We apply the same rules to everyone. To single out one individual for exceptional access is not consistent with my commitment to provide excellent care to all Ontarians.

We rely on science. We rely on evidence. The members opposite have chosen to disregard evidence, to disregard science. I think that is wrong. I believe, because I do feel that I am put in a position of enormous responsibility, that I must rely on evidence so that we can get people the care they need, the care that will help them.

CATARACT SURGERY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Seniors in the London area are facing unacceptable wait times for cataract surgery. My constituents are writing me, as surely as they

are writing the Minister of Health, in distress. Because of the year-long wait times for this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Whom to, please?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Oh, my apologies. The Minister of Health. She's been getting a lot of questions; I just forgot to introduce her. Do you want me to start again, Speaker? No? Okay.

My constituents have been writing me, Minister, as surely as they have been writing you, in distress because of the year-long wait times for this necessary surgery. Ophthalmologists warned this government that problems were brewing, and the Liberal government chose to ignore their concerns. Now seniors are paying the price. Does the health minister think it is right that seniors needing cataract surgery are forced to wait for a year or longer in her own hometown riding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I welcome this question because this party has a very strong record when it comes to focusing on getting wait times down. In fact, we have recently—for the sixth year in a row—received straight As from the Wait Time Alliance. Our wait times are lower than anywhere else. We've made great progress. Province-wide, we've cut five months off wait times for cataract surgeries. In the South West LHIN, when we took office, people were waiting 351 days; they were waiting a full year for that surgery. We have cut that wait time in half. Across the province, we have reduced wait times for cataracts. We've reduced wait times for various surgeries and diagnostic tests. We're very transparent about it. You can go online and see what wait times are for any procedures in any hospital in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Living with reduced eyesight can impact every aspect of someone's life. One constituent wrote about this year-long wait time, "This is unacceptable as my quality of life as a senior is grossly affected. I have problems with glare and this may affect my driving. This not only affects me, but also my immediate family as I may not be able to pick up my grandchildren after school, which will cost my daughter for after-school care."

The Minister of Health seems more concerned with patting herself on the back than taking the concerns of our constituents seriously. Speaker, my question is simple: Can the minister tell my constituents when cataract wait times will be reduced?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For all of the reasons that were mentioned in that letter, that is why we have really focused on bringing wait times down for cataracts. Across the province, wait times are down significantly. We were the first ones to actually measure, publicly post, publicly report and invest money to bring those wait times down. We have seen tremendous success.

In fact, I bet the member opposite would be interested in knowing our wait time success in other procedures: 98% of cancer procedures are being done within the priority level for targets, 100% of bypass surgeries, 94% of cataract surgeries, 89% of hip replacements, 85% of

knee replacements, 61% of MRIs, 87% of CTs, 98% of general surgeries and 92% of pediatric surgeries. Wait times are a big focus of our ministry, and we're seeing the results.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans I often meet and listen to families, as do all members of this House. One concern that I hear frequently from parents is that they want to know that the right services are in place for their child's development. This is a universal concern, and I know that in Ontario we're providing some of the best supports available anywhere in the world.

As a parent and grandparent myself, I know that these types of services make positive impacts in the lives of children. My question is, Mr. Speaker: Can the minister please tell this House what we are doing as a government to help children grow up to be healthy teenagers and then healthy adults?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you to the member from Ottawa–Orléans for this question. First off, there are a number of children in here. Welcome to all the children visiting us here today, and it's for you that this question is very important.

I'm a parent as well, as everyone knows, and nothing is more important to me—and I think everyone in this House—to make sure that children are prepared for school and life. I can say that there are many more programs available today than there were when my kids were young. My ministry is investing \$261 million in healthy development, services and supports directly for children and their parents. For example, we're providing the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program with \$89 million. This program supports women, children and their families, from the prenatal period through to a child's transition to school.

Through programs like this, our government is able to directly assist in the healthy development of our young people. This is part of our government's commitment to provide children with the best possible start in life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to thank the minister for her answer. It's very clear to me that this government takes the responsibility of healthy childhood development seriously. It is making significant investments. However, this is an area where there's always improvement to be made. As a government, we need to be constantly looking to improve the services we provide and also seek out new and better methods.

I understand that in March of this year, the Healthy Kids Panel released a report with recommendations to improve healthy childhood development—specifically, reduce childhood obesity. I'm pleased that our government established this panel to help combat such an important issue. Can the minister please tell this House more about this report and how our government is responding?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Again, thank you for the follow-up question.

First, I'd like to thank the Healthy Kids Panel for their report, which aims to improve health and well-being. The report made a number of recommendations on some important Ministry of Children and Youth Services programs, as well as recommendations across government. These include our Poverty Reduction Strategy, Student Nutrition Program and the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy—all strategies that we are investing in.

We're committed to reviewing the recommendations in order to inform our future. In fact, Speaker, Minister Matthews and I are co-chairing the working group on the Healthy Kids Panel report to review each of those recommendations. That group will be extremely important to move towards this government's goal to improve early childhood development services.

Again, we're committed to working with our colleagues across ministries to inform our next steps.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, I'm sending these energy bills to you and I'd appreciate you taking a look at them, and I'll leave them with page Sarhan. Thank you.

Minister, earlier this week, I met with a business owner from my riding who showed me his massive energy bills. Most notably, his global adjustment has skyrocketed. If you look at his bills, you'll notice that he is using less power than two years ago but paying much more, and his global adjustment has almost tripled.

Another business owner told me that he "is considering leaving Ontario and moving to the Detroit area, where he can get cheaper rent and his energy costs would be half of what they currently are," taking jobs and tax revenue from my community. Minister, my question is simply this: If you were in my shoes, what would you tell these business owners?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would tell those owners that we have made significant investments in the energy system because of the negligence of that party when they were in government, requiring us to spend \$21 billion on new generation and \$10 billion on new transmission, and that pushed electricity rates up. As a result of those rates going up—investments which were absolutely necessary to create a reliable and clean system—we created a number of programs for the energy sector, including the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit for families and for industry—and that includes small business and farmers—the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program, the industrial conservation initiative and the industrial electricity incentive.

1130

In addition to that, over the last seven or eight months, we've taken major steps to put pressure—to put prices down, and that included about—

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Minister, actions do speak louder than words, and I really hope that you're not misleading Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I withdraw.

Minister, my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex has lost over 10,000 manufacturing jobs since this government took office in 2003, and we cannot afford to lose any more.

You tell turbine companies not to produce energy while you continue to pay them for not producing energy. All the while, more and more turbines continue to be built up, not only in my riding but throughout Ontario.

Here's the reality, Minister: Energy costs are doubling and crippling manufacturing. Businesses and families are struggling to pay bills and keep their lights on.

Admit that your Green Energy Act is a failure. Minister, will you admit that you do not have a real plan to lower energy rates—

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

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: [*Inaudible*], and as I said earlier today in question period, by renegotiating the Samsung agreement, we saved ratepayers \$3.7 billion over the life of the contract. By changing the domestic content rules for the feed-in tariff program, we saved ratepayers more than \$1.9 billion over the life of the contracts. Deferring the construction of two nuclear reactors at Darlington generating station is avoiding an estimated \$15 billion in new construction. All of those would have put pressure on costs going up. These are going to put the right pressure on our investments to push costs down.

We will be releasing our long-term energy plan within several weeks, and I ask the member to await that and he'll see exactly what the future holds for us.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Grassy Narrows First Nation was not consulted in good faith when the long-term management direction of the Whiskey Jack Forest on their traditional land was developed. MNR plans show that clear-cutting on traditionally Grassy Narrows territory will start as early as 2014, despite the community's strong objections.

In 2012, Premier Wynne visited Grassy Narrows as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and talked about rebuilding Grassy Narrows's relationship with Ontario to get it right, yet the exact opposite is happening.

Will the minister uphold his duty, do the right thing and consult with Grassy Narrows to obtain their consent regarding any forestry plans on their traditional lands?

Hon. David Orazietti: I certainly appreciate the question from the member. We obviously are very con-

cerned about the participation of First Nations in the forestry industry and their activity.

The member knows full well that there is a court challenge that is going to the Supreme Court as a result of the province being successful in a case that took place earlier with respect to the province having the right to be able to issue harvesting licences in the area.

We are certainly committed to working with the Grassy Narrows First Nation. We value their involvement and their participation in forest harvesting. As the member knows as well, wood from the Whiskey Jack continues to provide economic opportunities for First Nation communities as well as the local mills, also including a mill that is owned and operated by a local First Nation member.

Under the contingency plan, there are no planned harvest blocks located within the Grassy Narrows self-identified traditional lands, but we are very mindful of this issue and are committed to working with the Grassy Narrows First Nation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This Liberal government's disregard for the consultation process is causing serious problems with economic development, in addition to endangering this province's relationship with First Nations.

Grassy Narrows believes that MNR officers are interfering with their community members as they go about performing their regular traditional activities on their traditional land, instead of engaging in real consultation.

Will this government commit today to coming to the table, engaging with Grassy Narrows in serious consultation and obtaining their consent when it comes to activities within their traditional territory?

Hon. David Oraziotti: Nothing could be further from the truth. Our government is committed to participating and working actively with First Nations in this area with respect to the Whiskey Jack Forest, as well as the Grassy Narrows First Nation.

The member also knows that wood that comes off the Whiskey Jack SFL goes to support a mill that is owned and operated by a local First Nation member, and that the 10-year Crown Forest Sustainability Act, as well as the forest licence management plan that is actively being undertaken, are inclusive of First Nations' interests and rights.

We are very concerned, and we are very actively working with the First Nations to ensure their participation in this area that is so vital to their livelihood. I'd say to the member opposite, we're going to continue to do that.

We have a strong relationship in working with our First Nations, a strong partnership with First Nations. I'm certainly very pleased at the progress that we've made.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Attorney General. Legal Aid Ontario plays a vital role in providing access to justice throughout the province by providing high-quality legal aid services in a cost-effective and

efficient manner. Too many constituents who are in need of legal advice find that it can be very costly, and that may deter them from seeking appropriate legal advice.

In the most recent budget, our government made a commitment to expand funding to Legal Aid Ontario. Can the Attorney General please share how this new funding will expand services and how it may expand access to justice for low-income Ontarians and some of the more vulnerable citizens?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much for the question. It's unfortunate there won't be enough time for a supplementary because this is a good-news story.

I'm happy to tell you that our government, this year, has committed \$30 million in extra funding over the next three years for Legal Aid Ontario, with a specific emphasis on family law services and legal aid clinics. That's in addition to \$150 million that was given over four years, back in 2009.

The unfortunate part is that whereas at one time legal aid was the joint responsibility of the federal and provincial government and the funding was on a 50-50 basis, currently we're only getting 20% of the total funding from the federal government. Next week, there will be meetings with other provincial and territorial ministers, as well as the Minister of Justice, and this is certainly one issue that we'll be addressing with him at that point in time, because access to justice, whether it's in the criminal courts, the civil courts or Family Court, is absolutely essential if we want to have a good system of justice in the province of Ontario.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the minister responsible for the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games concerning the games' transit plan. This matter will be debated Tuesday, November 19, at 6 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My dear friends, this is the last day for our pages, and we wish them well. *Applause.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do believe they've done a tremendous job. They do us proud, and they do their families proud as well.

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

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: This morning I had the pleasure of introducing David Tanovich, the father of page Evan. This afternoon, it gives me great pleasure to introduce

10-year-old Nicholas and eight-year-old Mara Tanovich, the brother and sister of Evan, as well. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome a number of representatives from the high-tech world and the world of venture capital who are here from the great riding of Kitchener Centre: John Baker, the CEO of Desire2Learn, and Iain Klugman, the CEO of Communitech. They're joined by John Ruffolo and Michael Nobrega from OMERS.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Premier, if nobody else is, I would love to introduce Mayor Hazel McCallion, my hero.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome, Your Worship.

As is the tradition of the Speaker, we have with us, in the east members' gallery, representing Scarborough–Agincourt in the 35th to 39th Parliaments, Mr. Gerry Phillips.

The member from Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Where Gerry Phillips lives, Mr. Speaker.

I have a class from Duffin's Bay in Ajax on their way here. We took their picture on the staircase. Their teacher is Debby Morrissey. If you welcome them and lead the charge when they come in, that would be appreciated, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, I will.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to welcome the family of the Minister of Finance. His wife, his father and his sister-in-law, I believe, are here at the House, so I want to welcome them. I also know that my good friend Richmond Hill Councillor Godwin Chan is here, joining us at the House. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to bring a matter of great concern to the attention of the Minister of Health. My constituents Walter and Wilma Smith's rising medical costs are making it difficult for them to make ends meet.

The Smiths have been together for nearly 62 years, and throughout that time they had managed to create a successful life together—that is, until now. Today, they are barely surviving. Sadly, Mrs. Smith was diagnosed with cancer two years ago. After having successfully undergone treatment, she was left dependent on a colostomy bag. She now requires \$1,300 worth of medical supplies each year. While she and her husband are grateful for the Assistive Devices Program, which grants them \$600 per year, it is simply not enough, covering less than six months' worth of supplies.

Much like the majority of retired seniors in Ontario, Mr. and Mrs. Smith rely entirely on their pensions. Every cent that comes into their home is immediately dedicated

to their bills and medical supplies. They have even been forced to mortgage their home. Minister, this couple is in their 80s. Mr. and Mrs. Smith have no choice but to live very frugally.

The once cheerful and sweet couple have become tired, frustrated and disenchanted with this government that continues to do nothing but introduce more taxes to pay for their many scandals while seniors are paying the price. The Smiths, like many other struggling Ontarians, want to know why the government is not doing more. This government was elected to help the people of Ontario, and it's high time they started doing that.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Communities across my riding of Kenora–Rainy River have been grappling with an affordable and supportive housing crisis for a number of years, and recently the situation has become dire for those living in the Kenora area who are homeless. Recently, due to rising deficits and a change in the provincial funding formula, the Kenora Fellowship Centre, the city's only emergency shelter, has announced that it is forced to start charging homeless people money to stay overnight.

In northwestern Ontario, winters can be cold and harsh, with winter temperatures averaging minus 25 to minus 35 degrees Celsius without factoring in the wind chill. Just where does this government expect people to stay during the long winter nights during these frigid months? Well, I'll tell you where some of these people are forced to stay. Some, who are sadly the fortunate ones in this situation, are forced to sleep outside in tents because they can't afford the \$15-a-night charge at the emergency shelter. I can see that this isn't a priority for the members on the government side, who can't even be bothered to listen to the serious problems that we're facing in Kenora.

We can't blame the Kenora Fellowship Centre for doing the best that they can and for trying to make this seemingly impossible choice between keeping the lights on and helping some or being forced to close down permanently due to a lack of funding.

The real problem lies with the province for three reasons, Speaker: There is a profound lack of affordable and supportive housing units in my riding; woefully inadequate funding for emergency shelters that have already been forced to close, such as the emergency shelter in Red Lake; and changes need to be made to the ODSP that reflect the precarious living situation of people who find themselves homeless.

This is a very serious issue, and this government needs to get serious about protecting the most vulnerable people in our society.

VETERANS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today I rise in recognition of those women and men who have served and continue to

serve as members of our Canadian Armed Forces. Every year, on November 11, we honour and pay tribute to their courage, their tenacity and their dedication. We also thank them for their sacrifices, without which we would not have the freedoms that we enjoy today as Ontarians. These include veterans like John Thompson from my riding of Vaughan, who flew over 100 missions with the Royal Air Force in World War II. He and so many others like him showed tremendous bravery in the face of horrific circumstances.

Vaughan is also home to its own Royal Canadian Legion, Mackenzie Branch 414, which is led by president Jane Lowe. This organization, like others around the province, helps support veterans in my community and also sponsors groups like the Royal Canadian Air Cadets, squadron 283. They will be hosting a Remembrance Day parade and ceremony on Monday, and I encourage everyone in my community to attend to mark the contribution that our veterans have made for our benefit.

As I've said, Canadian soldiers have made great sacrifices for our communities, for our province and for our nation. It is only fitting that we gather together to remember and to say thank you to those who gave all of us so very much.

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY

Mr. Jim McDonell: Three years ago, this Legislature unanimously proclaimed September 28 as British Home Child Day here in Ontario. My colleague MPP Steve Clark co-sponsored that bill with former MPP Jim Brownell of my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. On that date, we recognize and honour the contributions of the British home children, who were part of the child migration movement that sent poor and orphaned British children to work in the colonies to seek a better life.

Our military history is a great source of pride to us Canadians, and the contributions to its success by the British home children were significant. Claude Nunney, at the age of 14, was placed at the home of Mrs. Donald Roy McDonald of North Lancaster in my riding. Claude later joined the 59th Stormont and Glengarry Regiment in June 1913 and was deployed to France as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

For most conspicuous bravery during operations against the Drocourt–Quéant Line on September 1 and 2, 1918, Claude Nunney was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal, and for his services in France, he was awarded the Victoria Cross. I understand that he is the only Canadian to have received all three of these medals.

Claude Nunney died of his wounds in September 1918.

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This Remembrance Day, the Ontario East British Home Child Family will be, for the first time, laying a wreath at the National War Memorial in Ottawa in remembrance of the many British home children, like Claude Nunney, whose contributions and sacrifices allowed us to enjoy the freedoms we have today.

HYDRO INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to bring to the attention of the House an issue that's happening—specifically the Minister of Energy.

We know now, as a result of some discussions between Hydro One and snowmobile clubs across northern Ontario, that hydro is moving in order to get snowmobile clubs to not put their trails on the right-of-ways. You can imagine what that means for snowmobiling across northern Ontario. A lot of trails are along right-of-ways of Ontario hydro lines.

I say to the minister, if he could look into this, that we need to find a way, yes, to make sure that the liabilities for hydro are done so that they're not exposed. But I've got to say, the idea that they're going to start moving people off hydro lines and they're going to start charging people, if it's in a municipality, for 50% of the municipal tax and to fence the areas and provide 24-hour security is exorbitant and, quite frankly, is going to put snowmobile clubs out of business.

I say to the Minister of Energy, or to the Minister of Infrastructure and renewal: It's something that you'll be able to look into, to make sure that snowmobilers this winter can keep on the trails that they've got now, and that we find some sort of resolution so snowmobilers are able to use those trails and Hydro One is able to protect itself from any liability that it thinks it may have.

ANGUS MACKAY WILSON

Mr. Phil McNeely: As Remembrance Day approaches and Canadians everywhere remember the sacrifices of our brave soldiers, past and present, I wish to honour the memory of Angus Mackay Wilson, who passed away in August this year.

Angus, whom I was proud to have known well, was a World War II veteran, a long-time resident of Cumberland village and a community leader.

In 1941, Angus, like many other young men at the time, answered the call to arms and joined the Canadian Army. During the war, he courageously served as a signalman with the Royal Westminster Regiment during the Italian campaign. This regiment has since become known for its outstanding record of never having failed a mission during the war.

Post-war, he and his wife, Alice, another veteran—from the Wrens—settled down in Cumberland, where they raised their three children.

Cairine Wilson, Angus's mother, from my home village of Cumberland, was the first female senator in all of Canada.

Angus lived his life as an engaged community member, holding various leadership roles on the village council, on the school board, at his church and at the local historical society, and he made the best maple syrup in the whole area. He remained active in the community up to his 90th year.

It is for these lifelong achievements that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and I recognized

Angus's record with a Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal at a joint ceremony just last year.

Remembrance Day is a special time of year when we remember all those ordinary citizens like Angus who stepped up when their country needed them and put their lives on the line so that we could all enjoy freedom.

I stand here today to say thank you to all those who have served and sacrificed so much for our great country.

Nous nous souviendrons.

FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today and congratulate an outstanding Caledon family as they are recognized as the Farm Family of the Year by the Peel Federation of Agriculture.

The Davis family is a wonderful example of a farm family that deserves the recognition of our agricultural community. Davis Feed and Farm Supply has been in business for nearly 25 years. The Davis family began in the dairy and horse feed business to provide a local, affordable option to farmers needing feed, and the company has grown every year since. Davis Feed and Farm Supply now offers produce and pet supplies in addition to feed, and also boasts an excellent garden centre. The 25-acre field filled with sunflowers that are grown for their own birdseed is an amazing sight to see in the fall.

I applaud the Davis family for their impressive contributions and outreach within our community, as they support and sponsor local sports teams, the 4-H club and area horse shows.

Agriculture is a fundamental part of our province and a strong part of the Caledon community. It is families like the Davises that exemplify strong farm families and remind us of our rich agricultural tradition, both in Dufferin-Caledon and across Ontario.

On behalf of Dufferin-Caledon residents and the Ontario Legislature, I would like to say congratulations to the Davis family on receiving this well-deserved recognition.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to acknowledge the Oakville Royal Canadian Legion, branch 114, and the Oakville Royal Canadian Legion, General Chris Vokes branch 486, in Bronte. Both are in my riding of Oakville.

As with all Royal Canadian Legions, they are so much more than just a social club. They actively assist veterans, who gave us freedom, and they remember those who served and who have passed on, protecting our country and our way of life. These Legions advocate for veterans' assistance, for pensions and for other benefits like treatment, appeals and insurance for those who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

Today it's not necessary to be a veteran of Canadian or the Allied forces or a family member to join the Legion. Your membership goes a long way to helping those who need our assistance in our community.

In November, one of the many events to raise money for Legions is the poppy drive, which we've had since 1921. The poppy reminds us of the veterans' sacrifices. We're all reminded not to forget the Canadians who died in war, serving our great country.

Every Legion in Ontario will have a Remembrance Day ceremony. It will be an honour to attend both of mine in the riding of Oakville. I would urge all members of the public and all members of the House to attend the events in their community. We will remember.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: In a few minutes, the Minister of Finance will rise in this House to deliver his fall economic update, the 2013 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. While I've not seen the document, I expect that he will argue that the government is taking action to encourage job creation, invest in vital infrastructure and strengthen Ontario's economy. If he sincerely wants to pursue these three goals, he needs to look no further than the very first private member's resolution on the Legislature's order paper, urging that the Highway 6 Morriston bypass project be added to the Ministry of Transportation's southern highways program.

The House has heard me raise this issue many times. On Highway 6 south of Guelph and just south of the 401, through the community of Morriston, there is a traffic bottleneck that often literally stretches for kilometres.

I want to thank the Minister of Community Safety for recently approving a community safety zone in Morriston. This initial step, coupled with the other traffic calming measures we hope to take, should help in the short term.

We know the government has been studying the need for the Morriston bypass for something like 30 years. The environmental assessment has been completed. The township of Puslinch is doing an economic study to show how the bottleneck is hurting our local economy as well as the province's economy, and we know that the government plans to spend \$2.2 billion on new highway construction this year. All I and my constituents want to know is, when will they build the Morriston bypass? The Minister of Finance could and should answer that question this afternoon in the fall economic statement. I call upon him to do so.

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

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Mr. Crack from the Standing Committee on General Government presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption.

The committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / *Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

Report adopted.

VISITORS

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, I ask your indulgence to acknowledge someone who has been very encouraging and supportive. As we all find in this House, through the work that we do, it's not always easy. I want to acknowledge my wife, Zenaida, who is in the audience today, and thank her for being here. Please welcome her.

Joining my wife is my father, Antonio, my cousin Eduarda and Larry Lall. Thank you as well.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Jim McDonell: I just want to correct my record from earlier today. I mentioned that Steve Clark was a co-sponsor of the British home child bill, but so is Cheri DiNovo.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order, and all members are allowed to correct their own record.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (EMPLOYEE RIGHTS), 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (DROITS DES EMPLOYÉS)

Mr. Natyshak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 129, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to employee rights / *Projet de loi 129, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne les droits des employés.*

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. Taras Natyshak: The bill amends the Labour Relations Act, 1995. Major features of the bill include the following: (1) successor rights in the contract sector, (2) reinstatement during organizing campaigns, (3) early disclosure of employee lists, (4) neutral and off-site voting and telephone-electronic voting, (5) just cause prior to first agreement or where no collective agreement is in effect, (6) re-employment after strike, and (7) an employee bill of rights poster placed in a conspicuous place in the workplace.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the 2013 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review: Creating Jobs and Growing the Economy.

We're introducing a new three-part plan for jobs and growth. Our plan is built on investing in people, building modern infrastructure and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate.

We will do so at a time when forces outside Ontario continue to affect our economy, leading many Ontarians to worry about their job security and their future. The recovery from the global recession remains uncertain, Mr. Speaker. What is certain is our government's determination to help families and businesses succeed.

Our plan is a new direction to grow the economy. Our plan is focused, our plan is responsible and fair, and our plan will serve every region of our great province.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to make new strategic investments to spur growth, create jobs, strengthen services and help families. Above all, we are on track to balance the budget by 2017-18. And should global economic conditions falter, causing revenue growth to fall further, our priority is clear: This government will continue to protect investments in jobs and families ahead of short-term targets.

We will grow our economy. Stronger growth and new jobs are the surest, fairest path to higher revenues and a balanced budget—not drastic cuts or business-killing taxes, Mr. Speaker, but by growing the economy and creating jobs.

Uncertainty in the global economy is leading to lower revenue growth. Ontario's revenues are now more than \$5 billion lower than projected since the 2010 budget. But we've taken strong actions to reduce spending

growth, which has allowed us to overachieve on deficit reduction targets four years in a row, something that no other government in Canada has accomplished.

Mr. Speaker, our Ontario has the lowest per capita spending anywhere in Canada. For the last two years, we've held program expense growth to less than 1% while improving public services. In fact, last year total government spending fell, for the first time in over a decade.

As we continue to look at our spending, we will do so responsibly, while ensuring we are focused on our priorities. Reckless across-the-board cuts, as some have tried in the past and continue to call for today, would put our province's schools, hospitals and economy at risk. Then there are those who are recycling the same ideas from half a century ago to recklessly raise taxes. These extreme approaches would slow economic growth and weaken Ontario's ability to balance the budget.

We cannot cut our way to success, because that only results in a race to the bottom. We cannot tax our way to success, because that strangles our ability to compete. We can and must grow our way to success. We'll pursue a better, fairer way.

Responsibility and fairness: These are the principles that guide us. They're not only the principles of our government; they are the principles embraced by Ontarians. We are protecting Ontario families while taking a balanced approach to eliminate the deficit. At the same time, we're going to make investments to help businesses grow.

We will continue to act on recommendations from the commission on reforming public services. This will, in part, help to reduce the net debt-to-GDP ratio to its pre-recession level of 27%. This is a measure of our ability to afford debt, because we cannot afford to pass that burden on to our children.

Building a prosperous and fair society means that governments must work together. Unfortunately, the federal government has been making changes to programs and funding that hurt Canadians, including those that affect Ontario's competitiveness. For example, in order to implement the Canada Job Grant, Ontario would have to divert \$232 million a year from job training programs that work to a one-size-does-not-fit-all federal program.

We also need Ottawa to commit to infrastructure projects. The federal government needs to commit to the Ring of Fire, home to rich mineral resources which offer tremendous economic development opportunities, not only for Ontario but for all of Canada. Bottom line: We need Ottawa to commit, the same way they do to other regional economic priorities in other parts of the country.

Not only are we investing in people; we're helping them invest in their future. The Canada Pension Plan is the foundation of the nation's retirement income system. Though this program has served generations of Ontarians well, we must make improvements now, especially for the middle class. So far, the federal government is resisting calls to make those enhancements. We all pay a heavy price for that inaction. Ontarians, and all Can-

adians, deserve leadership on this issue. That's why Premier Kathleen Wynne is leading the way to find a Canada-wide agreement on CPP enhancement.

Last week, finance ministers took a critical step forward by agreeing on the objectives of an enhancement to CPP. But if an agreement cannot be reached, we will move forward with a made-in-Ontario solution, a solution that will help provide greater peace of mind for those Ontarians at retirement.

Strong public services are vital to our economic success. I'm so fortunate that my dad chose Canada. I'm grateful that Ontario accepted him. He arrived here on pier 21 in 1953. Like so many, he's proud of our country that gave him opportunity; and at 88, he still gives back. Thank you, Dad. Because of him, I was fortunate to attend Ontario public schools. I got my degrees from Ontario's publicly funded universities. I worked in Ontario's thriving financial services industry. My children were born in Ontario's public hospitals.

1330

What is remarkable about that story is how typical it is, how it is shared by so many in this Legislature and across our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're on the side of Ontarians, especially our youngest citizens. We will continue to roll out full-day kindergarten, and next year, more than a quarter million children will benefit and get the best start in life. There are some critics across the aisle that call for us to cancel this program. That is not an option.

Our plan continues to support our children, right through post-secondary, putting them on track for rewarding careers. Our 30% off tuition grant helps more than 200,000 young people each year get the education they need for the jobs they want. And this government's youth jobs strategy will help 30,000 more young people find work and start a career. We will always invest in our young people.

Ontario's economy is also strengthened when everyone has the opportunity to achieve their full potential, and that's why our government will be fair. We are continuing to remove barriers to help people on social assistance be part of the workforce as well. And, Mr. Speaker, we're also helping seniors by introducing a new grant so they can participate in more community activities.

Nous allons continuer d'appuyer notre communauté francophone comme nous l'avons fait dans le passé.

As we all know, costs for many of today's necessities are rising. So we're working to reduce those costs and protect Ontario consumers. We will continue to move forward with our auto insurance rate reduction strategy. Our actions will reduce rates for Ontario drivers by 15%, on average, over the next two years. And to further reduce costs for Ontario drivers, we will reduce fees to the Drive Clean program as well. Cellphones are now a basic utility, and we're also moving forward with measures to protect consumers and reduce costs on those contracts as well.

Before 2003, the government of the day chose not to invest in infrastructure. Before 2003, schools and

hospitals were crumbling. Since 2003, we rebuilt schools and hospitals, and opened even more. In fact, there are more than 100 hospital projects on the go in centres like Thunder Bay, London and Cornwall. There are also more than 600 new schools being opened, planned or are under construction right across the province.

Before 2003, the people of Ontario weren't always certain the lights would go on. Since 2003, we upgraded and added more electricity transmission and supply, including clean energy. That means when you flip the switch, the lights go on and they stay on.

Mr. Speaker, investing in our transit, roads, schools and hospitals improves our province's competitiveness and enhances our quality of life. Congestion costs our economy \$6 billion annually in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area alone. These investments help businesses get their products to market more easily. These investments help families get to work, go to school and get back home more quickly and safely, and that's why we're investing in transit and that's what will make Ontario even more competitive.

As a result, we're introducing two new significant initiatives to fund these projects. One is a new fund for infrastructure projects: the Trillium Trust. Gains from asset sales, like GM shares, and/or real estate, like the sale of the LCBO headquarters, would help fund this trust.

Another innovative source of funding would be Green Bonds. Ontario would be the first Canadian province to promote and sell these bonds. These are a highly attractive and an economical way to invest in our transit projects.

We will invest \$35 billion over the next three years in these important infrastructure projects throughout the province. These investments will also help support and maintain more than 100,000 jobs annually. And to grow the economy in northern Ontario, our government is leading the development of projects like the Ring of Fire, working in partnership with industry and First Nations. We will also fund improvements to local roads and bridges throughout all our regions in small, rural and northern municipalities.

Ontario has also set the standard for the delivery of infrastructure projects. Through our alternative financing and procurement (AFP) model, 28 of 30 projects were completed under budget and ahead of schedule. By enhancing our AFP model, we will ensure that more Ontario companies are helping to build more projects. As a global leader, Infrastructure Ontario will work with the province's trade offices around the world and will promote the expertise of our construction companies, engineers, architects and financial services worldwide.

Despite uncertainties in the global economy, Ontario's fundamentals are strong. We have created a stable and competitive business climate by cutting taxes, including low corporate income taxes, and by eliminating the capital tax. We also introduced legislation to cut the employer health tax for 60,000 small businesses. This change would eliminate this tax for almost 90% of

businesses, and yet there are those who are delaying the passage of this bill. That is hurting small businesses. We urge the opposition to work with us to pass this important bill.

Our actions to reduce costs have created more opportunity for businesses to invest in Ontario. Studies show, however, that many companies are not taking advantage of new opportunities to innovate and improve their productivity. Ontario's and Canada's R&D spending as a proportion of GDP remains significantly lower than that of the United States. That, in turn, allows US competitors to produce goods and services more productively. This is a race. We cannot fall behind. We cannot falter. We cannot be faint of heart.

We will help businesses become even more competitive by encouraging them to invest in new machinery and equipment. That's why we'll consider measures already taken by other parts of the world to promote investments in communications, IT and training. More importantly, other parts of the world do this well, so we will now measure ourselves against those benchmarks and best practices.

We're also developing sector strategies for those key Ontario industries. We will take targeted measures to secure new investments from global companies that concentrate on communications, R&D and IT. To help turn more Ontario technology companies into global leaders, we'll also continue to invest in organizations like Communitel, a Waterloo-based innovation hub.

The government is also helping communities through our regional economic development funds to create jobs. Since their launch, almost 45,000 jobs have been created through these funds, most recently in places like North Bay, Kingston and Windsor.

As part of our plan to grow our economy, we're determined to create the industries of tomorrow. Centennial College will partner with Bombardier, Canada's leading aerospace manufacturer. Niagara College will expand its existing advanced manufacturing program. Recently, northern Ontario opened its first new law school at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and a school of architecture at Laurentian University in Sudbury.

Mr. Speaker, good things grow in Ontario. Our innovative agri-food industry provides more than 740,000 jobs across the province. Our Local Food Act will further support the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario. All these initiatives, and more, will help create the jobs of tomorrow today.

1340

We will not, as some suggest, simply cut for the sake of cutting. Those actions would hurt Ontario families and take our economy backwards. We cannot cut our way to prosperity, nor can we tax our way to growth. Instead, we will lead.

Mr. Speaker, the province is stronger when we work as one, because we know that, working together, we can achieve so much more than we can alone. And that is the beauty of Ontario. It is a place that is as compassionate as it is competitive, as fair as it is prosperous. And that

balance, one that is at the heart of our civil society, is just as important as any financial balance on the books, because it is also a competitive advantage in the global economy. Our Ontario Liberal government will protect that balance always.

We must continue to invest in our schools and in our hospitals. We will work together as one Ontario: employers and employees, rural and urban, north and south. Mr. Speaker, we'll take positive, practical steps to grow the economy. We will invest in our people. We will build modern infrastructure and we will support a dynamic and innovative business climate to create jobs in Ontario.

That is our plan for jobs and growth for a stronger Ontario—one Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses. The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I've always believed that it's Ontario's destiny to lead Canada. The kind of Ontario that my PC team and I want to build is an Ontario with more jobs, with better take-home pay, where students are off their parents' couch, that are now deep in debt with a university degree and diploma but no job to go to; where they're surging forward on their own, with their own home, making their way in their own career.

I see an Ontario where entrepreneurs are back in business, investing, innovating and creating jobs for men and women again. I see an Ontario that has the capacity, then, to match the extraordinary generosity, the big heart, of Ontarians to help our most vulnerable populations. That's the kind of Ontario my team and I want to build, but we're not going to get there with the same tired, out-of-gas, out-of-ideas Liberal government that has crossed the line into corruption with this gas plant scandal.

I had hoped, after 10 months and 37 panels, that the Liberals would have come into the House today with a plan that would have delivered on that Ontario we all want to see: a prosperous, proud Ontario moving forward, not slipping backwards. But instead, we saw a plan that focuses on the priorities of the Liberal Party—on saving seats—but certainly not on the priorities of the hard-working families in the province of Ontario.

One thing has become perfectly clear, and I'm sad to say this, but it's obvious that the Premier and her finance minister clearly do not understand the size of the problem that confronts our province and certainly do not understand what is required to fix that problem and move Ontario forward again.

It has become increasingly clear that the only party that has a plan to move us forward, the only party that can actually build Ontario and make it strong again, is the Ontario PC Party and the team that we have with us here today.

What is that plan, Speaker? It's a plan to restore the lost jobs, to recharge the manufacturing sector, to roll out more people working in the skilled trades, to bring Ontario that prosperity that it deserves and fulfill its destiny as a leader in Canada.

I'm asked time and time again why I care so much about the debt and the deficit of this province. They

gamble that people don't care about it, but people do care. Moms and dads care. I care. And no family would leave a \$20,000 debt on the backs of their sons and daughters, their grandchildren. That's exactly what this government proposes to do.

It's extraordinarily reckless as well, considering interest rates are going to go up sooner or later, to risk all of it, to risk health care, to risk education, because you couldn't make the decisions today to spend within your means.

We sharply disagree with the Liberal and NDP coalition, who believe they can spend their way out of deficit, who believe they can tax their way to prosperity. It's time to go down a different path with a bold new plan to turn our province around.

Here's what happened after 10 years of this expensive Liberal experiment: There are so many, almost a million, Ontarian men and women who can't find a good job in the province of Ontario; we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs that built the spine of our middle-class communities from Fort Erie to North Bay to Toronto; and average families are afraid to open up their hydro bills because those bills have doubled—all because the Liberals thought it was okay to throw away \$1.1 billion to close down gas plants simply to save two Liberal seats in the last election campaign.

Speaker, it is obvious—it is more clear now than ever—that only one party, the Ontario PC Party, has put forward a bold plan to set up Ontario for success. It is a plan to lower taxes to encourage investment in job creation. It is a plan to get hydro rates under control so families can actually pay the bills and businesses will invest. It's a plan to tear down the hidden tax of red tape, regulation and runaround to free up business to invest again. It is a plan to modernize our labour laws, to attract investment and let people control their own economic destiny. And it's a plan to clear aside gridlock by investing in subways, in highways, so families can spend more time together. That's our plan, a plan that not only talks about hope, but knows how to deliver hope.

Let's stop waiting for better, and let's make better happen. Let's change the team leading the province and bring in a team that can turn Ontario around.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed a privilege and an honour to be able to stand here and respond to the Minister of Finance. You know, I woke up this morning thinking I was going to be hearing some great things. I woke up this morning thinking there was going to be a new plan. I woke up this morning thinking that the Liberals were finally going to come to their senses and do some things right.

Then I sat in a little room, and we were handed this book and we were handed this speech, and we were told what was in here. This government is only about talk; it's not about action at all. It's about talking about things over which you have absolutely no control, and when you strip away these promises, all you are left with is vague study presentations. You end up with the same old status quo where well-connected interests get results and

everyday people get nothing. That is what is contained within this economic statement. Instead of trying something new, the Liberals released a 210-page book to pat themselves on the back.

Well, I'm not patting you on the back; I'm telling it like it is. The only people who will see an immediate benefit are those who are well connected to you. Your plans of setting up P3s and PRPPs are going to make more money for people who already have a lot of money. But everyday people will have to wait for the results that you promised them vaguely but that you will not and cannot deliver. People who were looking for results that create jobs and improve pensions will have to keep waiting while Ontario will study it some more, because what you're good at is studying it and not doing anything at all.

Ontario, which you say is now advocating for pension reform—you're advocating only for modest CPP reform, but say it's up to the Harper government whether it will ever be delivered. That's not leadership and it's not a good plan.

Vague promises of legislative changes—the only immediate changes will help the big banks, the insurance companies and financial interests, because that's your new plan.

1350

We've been talking for years about taking action on targeted tax credits. Instead of saying you're going to do that, you're now proposing to study it yet again, after 10 years. The book is full of all kinds of things you're taking credit for, most of which that you're taking credit for today being things that we in this caucus have proposed for years and that we made you do in the last two budgets. That's what you're taking credit for.

We're looking at what you're trying to do here. I tell you, I'm very, very saddened by what we're seeing. You're talking about debt and deficit. You're talking about what you're going to do. You've now carved out this new thing, that you're saying, "We're going to meet our budget targets, and we're going to be out of deficit. We're going to be out of" all of these things by 2017-18, and then you immediately follow that by saying that if you're not, you've got a new path. Well, you're not going to make it. I hate to tell you, your own projections show how anemic the growth is under your leadership. Your own projections show we're at 1.8% this year and we're going to be at 2.1% next year, and that is not enough growth for you to finance the things that you're talking about here. It is simply not possible.

We, as New Democrats, are looking for something different. We're looking for some change that will actually help ordinary people, and all we're seeing are these vague promises. Oh, yes, you're going to reduce auto insurance by 15%, maybe over two years, maybe. But whose idea was that in the first place? And, after months, you're nowhere near getting near to what you need to do, and you keep defending those same interests. You come out with financial policies that do not help ordinary people.

I'm asking you again—I've seen what you've said, but this is not the kind of economic statement that is going to help people in the province of Ontario. You may think it's going to help the Liberal Party. You may think it's going to help you in some form of election platform, but in my view and the view of the people of this province, they can see right through this document. They can see right through it for what it is. It's more airy-fairy promises that will end up going nowhere.

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

PETITIONS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, I'm receiving hundreds of these petitions.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

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

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and present it to Jack to bring it down to the Clerks.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have a little bit of quiet in the House? It's very difficult to try and conduct business.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas statistics indicate that 36% of the black community are the highest users of public transit in the greater Toronto area region;

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

"We propose through the Metrolinx 'Big Move' initiative to ensure that members of the black community are given priority access to apprenticeship, training programs and employment opportunities."

I agree with this petition, I affix my name to it and I give it to page Jack.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Michael Harris: I have a petition here with some 800 signatures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'Fail' results, which have resulted in the

overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean Program."

I wholeheartedly agree with this. I'm going to sign the petition and send it down with Sarhan to the table.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

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

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Aiden to deliver to the table.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. Phil McNeely: "Whereas MPP Bas Balkissoon's private member's bill, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act, 2013, received all-party support on October 31st, 2013; and

"Whereas Bill 116 was named in memory of a 52 grandmother who was killed by a truck as she boarded a Toronto bus; and

"Whereas the accident rate of drivers who drive while using hand-held devices are at a rate comparable to drunk driving; and

"Whereas penalties for infractions of section 78 of the Highway Traffic Act are too lenient;

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

"That members of the Legislative Assembly work together to pass Bill 116, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act (Hand-Held Devices Penalty), 2013, that would increase fines for distracted driving while using a hand-held device from \$300 to \$700 in addition to the loss of three demerit points for those in contravention of the law."

I support this petition, put my signature thereon and send it forward with Sophia.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

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

“That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I support this petition.

1400

MINIMUM WAGE

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

“Whereas Ontario’s minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

“Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government’s low-income measure (LIM); and

“Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

“Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers’ wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

“Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers’ pockets to spend in their local community;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living.”

I sign this and give it to Aiden to be delivered to the table.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition for the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone’s responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

“Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive

innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

“Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

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

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment.”

I have attached my signature to it and will pass it to Helen.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

“Whereas the Ontario health ministry’s Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

“Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that ‘Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.’”

I agree with this petition and sign it.

ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw attention to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“The Ontario Ranger Program takes youth out of their comfort zones by taking youth from the south and placing them in northern camps and vice versa, allowing for personal growth;

“The Ontario Ranger Program also helps nearby rural communities as the Ontario Rangers help with various work projects and build partnerships within the communities; the work is recognized and appreciated by these small communities;

“An extensive amount of work maintaining the interior routes in major provincial parks such as Quetico, Algonquin and Temagami is completed by Ontario Rangers on multi-day overnight canoe trips...;

“Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demonstrate that the Ontario Ranger Program is a valuable program to the youth of

Ontario, reverse the decision to close the Ontario Ranger Program and continue to help youth make a difference in Ontario.”

I fully agree and will hand it down to page Arianna.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition on behalf of some 850,000 Ontarians living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It reads as follows:

“Whereas more than 850,000 Ontarians live with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD (more than 70,000 in Central LHIN) and these numbers are climbing quickly; and

“Whereas COPD is one of the most costly chronic diseases in Ontario, currently responsible for 24% of emergency department visits and 24% of hospitalizations in this province; and

“Whereas respiratory rehabilitation is a Health Quality Ontario endorsed, evidence-based intervention that improves quality of life for people with COPD and other lung diseases while saving health care dollars; and

“Whereas due to lack of dedicated funding for lung health programs the respiratory rehabilitation program at Southlake Regional Health Centre—the only such program in Central LHIN—was recently cancelled;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to urge Central LHIN—and all LHINs—to develop evidence-based plans to address COPD and other lung diseases that coordinate resources and care across all levels of the health care system; and further,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately work with stakeholders to develop a province-wide action plan for lung health to improve prevention, early diagnosis and patient outcomes, while maximizing the return on health care investment.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

AIR-RAIL LINK

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

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

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

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to sign it and give it to Ian to be delivered to the desk.

AIR QUALITY

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean Program was implemented ... as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010...; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean Program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean Program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

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

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean Program.”

As I am in agreement with this, I have affixed my signature and given it to page Christina.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would like to just take this moment to recognize the students of a school in my riding who are in the east gallery: the Islamic Foundation School of Toronto.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each of the three parties to speak on the subject of Remembrance Day;

That, following all three remarks, we rise and observe two minutes of silence; and

That, following this Remembrance Day tribute, the House revert back to motions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader seeks unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: No, it's the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: November 11 is Remembrance Day, and traditionally there are many tributes offered throughout the province and in this chamber, where we recognize our veterans for their work that they've done and the sacrifices they've made.

We talk about defending democracy, defending freedom and defending the country, and those are noble ideals. But on another level, sometimes I think perhaps we forget to ask ourselves the visceral question, the very personal question: What did their sacrifice mean in terms of the individuals themselves, in terms of their families and in terms of their friends?

I think there is an obligation on all of us to try to understand their sacrifice in this very personal way and what it meant to them in their hearts, their minds and their souls; to feel for them, to grieve for them on a personal level for the death of a soldier, the death of a pilot, the death of a sailor. I think we have an obligation to try to feel the pain and the grief of their mothers and their fathers and their brothers and their sisters.

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When we reflect at some level—and it's impossible to comprehend, really, in the safety of our homes, in the safety of our careers, in the safety of this chamber exactly what that meant. How are we to understand what it must have felt like to be shot at, to be bombed, to suffer grievous wounds, to die from grievous wounds or to live with grievous wounds, blindness, limbllessness and other forms of maiming? But this is the visceral reality of what it was like to serve in the armed forces in defence of those noble virtues of democracy and freedom.

All of their names are chiseled on the various cenotaphs throughout the province of Ontario—in small-town Ontario, villages, big cities—and on high school remembrance plaques all over Ontario. But how many of us passing a cenotaph, passing one of those high school plaques, take a moment to pause and just look at those names and ask ourselves, "What did it mean to them and to their families on a personal level?"

I think that is our obligation. In fact, I know that is our obligation on this day of remembrance—the obligation to try to feel that reality, to feel that danger, to feel that fear, to feel that horror that they felt; to feel the horror and the fear and the anxiety that their families at home felt with their sons and daughters off facing grave dangers.

That is a visceral reality: World War I, 66,000 Canadians killed; World War II, 42,000 Canadians killed; Korea, 516; Afghanistan, over 160—and that's not counting the hundreds of thousands wounded. Each one of those individuals faced horror, fear, danger, and then all of those emotions that must have been on their parents' minds and on their brothers' and sisters' minds. Imagine, if you will, today in Afghanistan and the Middle East the fear of an individual, the fear of a parent for their loved one who's over there. Every step they take might be their

last step because they step on a land mine and blow up. Our obligation is to understand the magnitude of that risk and the magnitude of that sacrifice and then to respect it.

Let me tell you one story that I think more than any way drove the point home to me. Mrs. C.S. Woods of Winnipeg was invited by the Canadian government to the Canadian National Vimy Memorial unveiling, which happened in the late 1920s. There's a picture of her in a magazine of the time; I think it was the Toronto Star magazine or some such magazine. The magazine is in our library here. The magazine covered her story. There was a picture of her, Mrs. C.S. Woods of Winnipeg. She was standing there quietly, saluting in a very frail but dignified and brave manner. This is what the caption underneath the photograph of her said: "Among the Canadian pilgrims who attended the unveiling of the Vimy Ridge memorial was Silver Cross Mother Mrs. C.S. Woods of Winnipeg, who lost eight sons in the war. She wore all their medals" on that day at the Vimy Ridge monument unveiling.

I read that caption under the photo, and it just stopped me in my tracks for some time. But just let that thought sink in: a mother, a father and the family—eight sons. I did a little bit of research on Mrs. Woods' background. Mrs. Woods had 12 children—11 sons, all of whom enlisted. Two, in fact, were underage. And she lost eight of them. Need I say more?

I think we have an obligation to ask ourselves: How do we comprehend that sacrifice? How do we honour that sacrifice? How do we remember that sacrifice? That's our challenge on this Remembrance Day.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to represent Tim Hudak and the PC caucus as we commemorate the 105th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

The total loss of life in the two world wars is mind-boggling. While reports vary because of insufficient information, 100 million casualties worldwide is the number often cited. These numbers are important to remember. It is necessary, in order to bring into perspective what war was like.

On November 11 each year, and through the remembrance period, we recall the sacrifice made by those who did not return. The First World War was known as the war to end all wars, and for those involved, the scope of the casualties, you would think, would have convinced everyone that this could never be allowed to happen again.

The First World War demonstrated how much man's ability to destroy one another had progressed through advancing technology and weaponry; how wars were fought, however, had not. It demonstrated its savagery and futility at the same time. It was waged from July 1914 until November 11, 1918, when the guns fell silent.

Battles raged on. Ground was won, gained and lost, and gained and lost again. By today's standards, the numbers are staggering—almost unimaginable. An example of this is the Battle of the Somme. The Battle of the Somme lasted from July 1 until November 18, 1916. Some 1.2 million soldiers were either killed or wounded

in the fighting. Our Newfoundland Regiment lost over half their men, with 70% casualties in the first 30 minutes of the battle.

The following year, Canadians fought in the historic battle of Vimy Ridge, which lasted from April 9 to 12, 1917. The battle was the first time all four divisions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force fought together, succeeding where repeated attempts by our French allies had failed to take the ridge. It has been said that it was on those four days that Canada truly became a nation.

Having experienced carnage like the world had never seen convinced many that this would in fact be the war to end all wars. However, less than 21 years later, the world was back at it again, engaged in a war that had to be fought against the forces of tyranny and fascism.

Once again, our brave soldiers heeded the call. I recall, as a young boy, Remembrance Day parades in my hometown of Barry's Bay. In those days, the parade was full of veterans. Some were from the First World War; many more, including my father, from the Second World War; and others, from the Korean War.

As the years went on, I recall when there were no more First World War veterans marching in the parade, and I watched as the Second World War and Korean War veterans aged and became old men. Even as they aged, when they marched in those parades, there was a pride and resolve in their faces and their step. Every one of them had their stories and their memories, some that they would speak of and some of which they simply could not.

Despite their experiences, none of them regretted signing on and indicating their willingness to give their life in order to defeat the forces of evil.

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They went to war as boys and came home as men. After experiencing all the horror they did, they were expected, without skipping a beat and without a lot of support, to involve themselves in society, get to work, raise families and build our country, and that's exactly what they did.

When they came home, they continued to serve their country in so many ways. Many of them served in public life, some of them in this Legislature. I think that added to the collegial attitude this place had in years gone by. People who fought side by side in something as terrible as a world war have a different sense of perspective when it comes to seemingly petty political issues.

Each and every year, there are fewer and fewer of these brave souls left among us. We must take every opportunity to thank, in our most sincere way, those who are left and assure them that long after they are gone, we will still remember.

The freedoms we enjoy today, the freedom to assemble, as we do here, and so many others, we owe them all to those who fought and died and to those who fought and came home.

There is nothing we can do to repay those who did not return. They gave their lives that we might have ours. All we can do is ensure that their sacrifice will be remembered in the right and proper way each and every year.

They fought; they died. They saw man at his worst; they saw man at his best. They fought in war, but their goal was peace. They recognized that peace could not come without a price. The greatest gift we can give them is a continuing commitment to find that peace so that someday, if that elusive goal is reached, we can finally say unequivocally that their sacrifice was not in vain.

I urge everyone in this House and across this great province of Ontario to participate in a Remembrance Day ceremony in their community. It is the least we can do. Lest we forget.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, like many people here, I'm born of the generation after the war. We grew up listening to the stories of our fathers and mothers, our aunts and our uncles, and our neighbours about the experiences they had during those times of the Second World War and, in some cases, the Korean War, for my own family. We grew up as children in awe of these people and thinking what an amazing experience these people had and how lucky they were. We thought as children, "My God, look at those stories." We'd run to the movies to watch John Wayne and others re-enact those moments, as we saw them then as young children, of glory in the battles around the world when it came to the Second World War.

We picked up the comic books, and we read every comic book we could get our hands on. We read the stories. We wanted to get as much information as we could because we felt as if we were missing out on something, because we were missing out on an experience that our parents, our mothers, our fathers, our uncles, our aunts or neighbours had gone through. We thought, "Jeez, were they ever lucky." At least that's how I felt as a young boy growing up.

My father served. My uncle served, as many of my aunts and uncles served in different parts of the armed forces during the Second World War, many of whom saw action, many who were shot and some who were decorated. I grew up thinking, "My God, I'm so unlucky not to be part of that generation; look at this experience that they had." I never understood at first when I'd listen to the stories of the aunts and uncles and others who talked about their experiences in England, North Africa or Italy, as they went through the various theatres of war that Canada was involved in, and for some of the later generation, those who served in Korea.

But here's what's remarkable, and it took me years to figure this out: They never talked about the experience of war. They talked about camaraderie. They talked about the times that they got together and had a couple of drinks, stole a couple of eggs and found a bottle of wine. They just had a great time thinking of those stories when their friends they were in this experience with were able to share in each other's company and find some normality in this experience that they were going through. Those are the stories that I remember, and I thought, "That's what war's all about. It's about this glorious experience." And it wasn't until my family members were a lot

older—I remember my Uncle Con; my Uncle Conrad Bisson was my godfather. When I was at the funeral, my aunt said, “Gilles, you need to know that your uncle, most nights when he went to bed, woke up in a cold sweat.” He was a flame-thrower operator. She said he would wake up in the middle of the night and still smell the flesh burning.

There is nothing glorious about war; it’s a horrific experience, and that’s what I began to figure out as I got older. The reason that our fathers and our mothers and our aunts and our uncles and our neighbours never talked about the actual experience is that it’s not one that they can share with anybody else. It’s an experience that you can talk about only to others who have been there with you, and you try to find some way to hold on together before you go nuts or you hit the bottle or your marriage breaks down or you beat your children, whatever it might be, because those experiences marked those men and women in ways that we understand as a generation after the war.

Luckily for me and luckily for all of us, most people came through that experience, were able to land on their feet and make good for themselves and figure out some way to process everything that had happened as far as those horrific experiences, but some didn’t. Some, to the day they died, were affected and marked by those experiences.

I used to wonder: Why is it that a lot of my uncles tended to hit the bottle a little bit more than others? That’s what it was all about. Some of them were just trying to forget, and sometimes they got some bad habits when they were in England, North Africa or Italy, because sometimes, yeah, they did find a couple of eggs and a couple of bottles of wine and had a good time.

But what it teaches us, and what Remembrance Day is all about, is what the legionnaires say at all of these ceremonies—“Lest we forget”—because war is not something that is glamorous; war is not something that is glorious; war is not something to be celebrated. We’re to celebrate those who served on behalf of us so that we can have the democracy that we have today, but learn from their experience never to do it again.

Millions of people died in the Second World War. Imagine what this planet would be like if many of those people from various nations, from Russia to Canada and everywhere in between, had been able to live on this planet and contribute to our society, how different a planet we might be. But, instead, they were taken quite horrifically in all kinds of different manners and all kinds of different experiences.

So I say to all of us: Yes, let’s go to the Remembrance Day ceremonies, let’s go and celebrate with our vets, let’s celebrate their contribution, but let us not forget that war is not glorious. War is an experience that none of us should have to experience, and let’s be thankful that those before us did so that we don’t have to ourselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would all members, staff and guests please rise to observe two minutes of silence in remembrance of those who served.

The House observed two minutes’ silence.

1430

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I just want to thank all those members for their tributes. We shall not forget.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members’ public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion on private members’ public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 59 and 61 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 59 and 61 be waived. Agreed? Motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the reappointment of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has asked for consent to move a motion on the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, as follows:

“To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

“We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the reappointment of Irwin Elman as the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth for a term of five years, commencing on November 25, 2013, as provided in subsection 6(1) of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007, S.O. 2007, chapter 9.”;

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy seeks unanimous consent to move a motion on the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to conduct a comprehensive review of the Local Health System Integration Act, and the regulations made under it, as provided for in section 39 of the act; and

That within one year after commencing this review, the committee shall present a final report to the assembly, including its recommendations with respect to amendments to the act and the regulations made thereunder; and

That the committee be authorized to release any reports while the House is adjourned by depositing a copy of any report with the Clerk of the Assembly, and upon the resumption of the meetings of the House the Chair of the committee shall bring any such reports before the House in accordance with the standing orders; and

That the prior arrangements relating to LHINs agreed to by the committee on September 24, 2013, be rescinded and replaced with the following:

As part of its comprehensive review of the Local Health System Integration Act, also known as LHSIA, and the regulations made under it, the committee shall consider, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) The current decision-making process at Ontario's local health integration networks (LHINs) and whether local representation, accountability and transparency are incorporated into the process and, if not, how and where these can be better achieved;

(2) Input regarding the extent to which LHINs have fulfilled their obligations under the act, including input from, but not limited to, LHIN board members and employees, board members and employees from other health service organizations and health care policy experts in all health sectors; and

(3) The recommendations of the 2012 Drummond report as it relates to the LHSIA.

(4) While the House is in session, until such time as its final report is complete, the committee shall devote one of its two regularly scheduled weekly meeting days to conducting this review;

(5) The committee is authorized to travel for up to eight days, when the House is not sitting, for the purpose of conducting public hearings or for report writing, the details for such travel to be determined by the subcommittee;

(6) Prior to the commencement of public hearings, the committee receive a technical briefing on the LHSIA from staff of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

(7) The public hearings be advertised on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the committee's website and the Canada NewsWire;

(8) The subcommittee shall determine the manner in which witnesses shall be scheduled, including the length of time for witness presentations and questions from each party, and shall set a deadline for written submissions; and

(9) The subcommittee shall set its own deadlines for any summaries from the research officer, or for any interim report(s).

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Dispense.

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

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES VÉHICULES TOUT TERRAIN

Mr. Grant Crack: It gives me great pleasure to rise today and ask my colleagues in this House for support on motion number 48.

I move that, in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four seat side-by-side vehicles and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: As I said, it's a pleasure, and I would like to thank my colleague from the NDP, MPP Mantha, who I spoke with recently and is very supportive of this. I know that the member has put a petition forward, if not a number of petitions forward, in support of this, and I look forward to hearing his remarks later on.

Speaker, regulation 316/03 came into effect on July 31, 2003, and I think it's appropriate that I clarify that this regulation falls under the Ontario Highway Traffic Act. I would like to reference section 191.8(1), (2) and (3):

"191.8(1) No person shall drive an off-road vehicle on a highway except in accordance with the regulations and any applicable municipal by-laws....

"Regulations

"(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations,

"(a) classifying off-road vehicles and drivers;

“(b) permitting and regulating the operation of any class of off-road vehicle on any highway, any class of highway or any part or parts of such highway, and permitting any class of driver to drive an off-road vehicle on any highway, any class of highway or any part or parts of such highway, and prescribing conditions for any such permission.”

So, in essence, Mr. Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor can make these regulations.

It also goes on further, on number (3), “Municipal bylaws”; I just want to make sure that I get this into the record as well:

“(3) The council of a municipality may pass by-laws,

“(a) permitting the operation of off-road vehicles with three or more wheels and low pressure bearing tires on any highway within the municipality that is under the jurisdiction of the municipality, or on any part or parts of such highway;

“(b) prescribing a lower rate of speed for off-road vehicles with three or more wheels and low pressure bearing tires than that prescribed for off-road vehicles by regulation on any highway within the municipality that is under its jurisdiction, or on any part or parts of such highway, including prescribing different rates of speed for different highways or parts of highways.”

1440

I think what I'd like to do now is just maybe give a little bit of history as to why this particular issue is important to me. I've always been an avid off-road vehicle enthusiast. I first purchased a dirt bike when I was 16 years old. I was able to use the trail system from home to go and work at the Glengarry Golf and Country Club. Back then, I paid \$150 for my Honda 70, and as I said, I used it daily. If I have time later, Speaker, I think I'll tell a little story about my father and an experience he had on his first attempt at operating that dirt bike.

Just until recently, within the last 18 months, I was an owner of a Honda 150 and my son, Calvin, had a Honda 100. We no longer have those particular dirt bikes at this point, but I'm proud to say that I own a Polaris 600 snowmobile.

Although I never have owned a four-wheeler, I have many friends—my brother-in-law, Jean Beriault is an avid four-wheelist. He uses it for hunting. I know they're used by farmers in our region and in rural Ontario—fishermen, trappers, a very handy utility tool that provides many different benefits to the rural economy.

I really enjoyed my time having owned an all-terrain vehicle, in particular a motorcycle. In rural Ontario, it's part of life; it's a way of life.

When I was mayor back in 2006, the previous council did not want to entertain allowing the use of four-wheelers on municipal roads. I ran in the campaign and said that I would fully support the use of all-terrain vehicles on municipal roads, and as such was fortunate enough to have council's support. So we passed the bylaw, and I can tell you that it was well received. During the following five years that I was mayor, there were just a number of small complaints. We've never had

anything, that I'm aware of, serious in nature happen that would make me second-guess that decision that I had made.

I know that over 90 municipalities in the province of Ontario have these types of bylaws. They're writing and have written letters of support requesting our government to allow for this change in the regulation.

Basically, what I'm asking this House to support today is to allow four-wheelers to carry a passenger—they're called two-ups—and also for side-by-sides, which is a four-wheeled all-terrain vehicle that can carry a passenger. You don't have to straddle it; you can sit on it. I think these types of vehicles are manufactured in a very safe manner, and there should be no reason why we couldn't seriously entertain this.

I just want to give some statistics. In 2012, there were 390,821 off-road vehicles registered in Ontario, and 151,985 of these were ATVs. According to the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council, 11,320 new ATVs were sold in Ontario in 2012. The interesting point in this is, actually, new sales from 2006-12 were 14,287 units annually. So in the last year, 2012, the numbers have gone down. I think this regulation change would be very good for the industry, to regain some of the market share and really promote what's important to rural Ontario.

I can tell you, the gentleman who first brought this to my attention was a gentleman by the name of Nil Boulet. He's part of the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicles, and he was quite helpful in helping me to understand the regulation. Of course, he comes from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, one of the greatest rural ridings in the province of Ontario. Having spoken with him and working with him, he has provided me with some more information that, in 2005, Canadians spent \$3.3 billion on ATV-related activities—sales, accommodations, fuel, that type of thing. The average age of an owner of an ATV is 37 years old, and the average purchase price is \$10,000. Those are significant investments, and given the age of the average ATV user, it's obvious that these people are responsible. They are licensed. They follow the rules of the road. They respect the municipal bylaws. That I can attest to from personal experience, having been mayor.

The all-terrain vehicle club of eastern Ontario, which has a number of members right in my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, not only represents the interests of its members but it is also able to ensure that ATVing continues to grow and be recognized as a safe and responsible form of all-season outdoor recreation. This mandate is accomplished through education and communication, promoting the safe, lawful and responsible use of ATVs.

In my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, there are over 300 kilometres of trails, extending from my hometown of Alexandria right up to Lefaivre. I know in this House I've spoken about Lefaivre and La Foire gourmande that's hosted there. There's a ferry there. In the winter, ATVs could utilize the ice bridge and could use the ferries coming from Quebec and Ontario—in

particular the two-ups and the side-by-sides. This would create a great economic opportunity for more tourism because, in Quebec, there is a regulation in place that does allow for two-ups and side-by-sides to use the trail systems, to use the sides of the roads. Of course, the roads are all designated as to where they can travel and where they can cross at 90 degrees. So it is safe. They're responsible.

I believe that if this regulation change were made, it would create more opportunities for different entry points across the province, in eastern Ontario in particular, since that's where I'm from, and in Arnprior and Pembroke. I think it would be great if I could get the support of everyone in this House to support my constituent in the eastern Ontario all-terrain vehicle club.

I recently became aware also of a newly formed group. It's the Ontario Powersports Working Group. It's a coalition of leaders from across the province. They work together, promoting healthy recreational living, co-operative relationships with related stakeholders, trail stewardship, environmental conservation tourism, and growth and rider safety. I'm starting to learn a lot more about this organization, and I look forward to working with them.

I had the opportunity to speak the other day—yesterday, as a matter of fact—with Glenn Draper from ATV Ontario, Wayne Daub from the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicle Clubs, Peter Wood from the Ontario Federation of 4 Wheel Drive Enthusiasts, Dave Grummett of the Ontario Federation of Trail Riders, Tim West and Ron Purchase of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, Robert Ramsay and Jo-Anne Farquhar of the Motorcycle and Moped Industry Council, and the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council.

I really appreciated their support on this, but I think one of the things that has brought more than just support for what we're attempting to do here is that we need to really take a serious look, and I would ask the ministry and the minister to take a look, at dirt bikes as well. As I said, I was an avid dirt bike enthusiast. I think they should be given the same privilege as the four-wheelers and two-ups. Perhaps some of my colleagues will be speaking to that as well.

Just a little on my father, since I do have a couple of seconds. My grandparents were at home. My mother was standing there, looking down at the schoolyard as my father was taking the dirt bike for the first spin. There was a former sand pile, but there was a dip in the grade and he went through it, looking up at us as if things were all good, and all of a sudden, there was a dust cloud. I ran down and fixed his glasses up and put them back on. He learned a lesson. Thank God he had a helmet on. My point here is: Things do happen in life. These are safe vehicles if they're used safely and properly.

I look forward to hearing some of the comments from my colleagues.

1450

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a few minutes to speak in support of this motion. I would certainly credit the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for bringing it forward, but I think he must have been reading our northern jobs and resources white paper. If he was, he would note that path 14 of our northern white paper, which the PC Party introduced a couple of months ago, was that the Highway Traffic Act can be continually updated to accommodate recreational off-road vehicles like ATVs, Argos, two-ups and side-by-sides.

This is something that our party has previously put forward. It's something that, if we form government, we would certainly like to do across the province. So, obviously I'll have to speak in support of this motion.

I've had lots of emails from constituents in Parry Sound–Muskoka, as well, who are supportive of the motion. Many of them are under the impression that it's a private member's bill and that it's going to change the regulation. It's a motion and certainly raises awareness on the issue, and I support that. But the government actually needs to change the regulation if they want to make this happen. I guess this is a first step, so I'm pleased to see that it's coming forward.

As I mentioned, I've had lots of emails from people within my riding, including the mayor of Burk's Falls. As the member mentioned, there are certain designated provincial highways that the current ATV rules allow a very specific definition of an ATV: four wheels, one person, you straddle it. On the highway I live on, for example, Highway 118 East, you can ride a traditional ATV. Many of the municipalities, especially across Parry Sound—I'd say about half the municipalities—allow ATVs on certain roads within the municipality, and in Muskoka more of them are starting to allow it. Bracebridge is in a trial period of allowing ATVs right now; Gravenhurst as well, I believe, is doing a trial period for ATVs.

But more and more people are using the side-by-side machines. Sometimes it's people who want to go down a dirt road for a short distance to access a woodlot, or it could be farmers, it could be hunters, it could be people who are trying to access a trail for recreational purposes, and there certainly are pluses for tourism as well.

The reeve of Burk's Falls, Cathy Still, wrote me and said:

"Hi, Norm

"Hope all is well.... Could you please support private member's bill"—thinking it's a bill—"reg 316-03 before the House concerning the allowing of side-by-side ATVs on our roads.

"It would be a very large boost to the Almaguin Highlands economy. With the municipalities in the district having already passed bylaws supporting ATVs using our roadways, I would think this is the next step."

A councillor for another Parry Sound municipality, Merv Mulligan, wrote me as well. I won't read the whole email, because I don't have time. But again, he's supportive of benefits for tourism in Parry Sound. I have Dennis Stalkie writing me from Muskoka, saying, "This will not

drastically affect us here in Muskoka, but will in Parry Sound and the Almaguin Highlands and Haliburton and other areas where the operation of ATVs is allowed. There are many economic benefits that will accrue with increased use of off-road vehicles in these areas. Who knows? As we age, we may get off our bikes and quads and get into side-by-sides.

“Regards
“Dennis.”

Also, the owner of a campground in the Kearney area wrote me, again supportive of two-ups and the fact that he uses them around his campground and would like to be able to use them recreationally. In many cases, you do have to go along a bit of a road to get on a trail, and that’s currently illegal in a side-by-side or an Argo.

I’m afraid I’m out of time, Mr. Speaker, but I’d like to say I’m supportive of this motion.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I won’t stand here and claim all the glory for this; I’m going to actually give it to the individuals of this province who have been flooding both my office and a lot of my colleagues’ offices with their requests to see these changes, what it would actually mean to them and to their communities as far as tourism dollars and economic benefits, and just the simple enjoyment of having your family with you.

It’s with great pleasure that I rise today and support the motion of the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell requesting that the Minister of Transportation change the definition of an off-road vehicle—an ORV—under Highway Traffic Act regulation 316/03.

Finally, the voices of ORV enthusiasts across Ontario are being heard as they repeatedly ask that this regulation be changed to include two-up off-road vehicles as well as two- and four-seat side-by-side off-road vehicles, to allow them to be driven under the same conditions as other recreational off-road vehicles.

I just want to ask you to indulge me for a second, Mr. Speaker, or a little bit. Again, I want to give thanks to the member for bringing this motion forward. It took some initiative.

To the thousands, the hundreds, and everybody—all the organizations, the dealerships—across the North Shore, across northern Ontario and across this province who have provided my office with the petitions that we’ve been presenting since April of last year—my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane as well has been presenting some of these petitions to highlight this issue—they are the ones who actually got this done.

I’m really glad, and I’ve got to give credit to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who took the initiative of bringing this forward. You’re right: It is a motion, and we’re going to need to push this a little bit more. It’s not a binding issue, but I know I can count on individuals like the Elliot Lake ATV Club, the ATV club out of Wawa, and individuals like Mark Hamerton, who is the marketing director for the Ontario Federation of ATV Clubs, who provided some information for me

today so I can actually include it in some of the discussions that we’re going to be having today.

The community of Dubreuilville: It’s a lifestyle that they have there with these types of vehicles. You cannot believe how much of an engaging process this is when you actually enjoy an evening with your entire family. It’s a culture; it’s a good way of life. I want to say kudos to Luc Levesque, who is probably watching right now. I look forward to working with you on this, Luc, and I know you’re going to be helping me out on this.

I just want to add that in the mid-1960s and through the early 1970s, the term “ATV” was originally used to refer to a non-straddle-ridden, six-wheel, amphibious off-road vehicle, an ORV. And 1967 saw the introduction of the first three-wheeled ATV, which was straddle-ridden. In 1987, safety concerns ultimately ceased the production of the three-wheelers, causing all ATV manufacturers to upgrade and develop the first four-wheeled ATV models. In recent years, with manufacturers recognizing the popularity and demand for this new, exciting type of road-riding experience, they introduced the two-up-passenger ATVs and side-by-side models as well.

Closer to home, in light of the growing ATV sales and the evident demand for places to ride, the Elliot Lake ATV Club and the city of Elliot Lake invested a great deal of time, effort and resources in preparing for the economic prospect, as they recognized the potential tourism dollars and opportunities.

In early 2000, Elliot Lake was chosen as the initial signature site in a pilot project, as the community demonstrated the commitment and willingness to work with all interests to develop a tourism product built around an experience based on the use of an all-terrain vehicle, an ATV, on a shared-use, community trail system. This initiative involved the federal government, the province and five founding communities—Elliot Lake, Mattawa, Eastern Ontario (Tweed), Cochrane and Georgian Bay (Parry Sound)—resulting in a marketing alliance known as ATV Ontario.

Ontario now boasts approximately 40-plus ATV clubs and over 2,000 kilometres of well-managed trails, with more being added each year. Ontario is the ultimate ATV playground for everyone to enjoy.

Changing regulation 316/03 is a smart and safe move. As well, it provides an economic benefit to ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, not to mention the communities promoting this outdoor activity as a tourist destination.

The off-road vehicle industry continues to hold its own with steady ATV and two-up passenger sales, but side-by-sides make up approximately 40% of the off-road vehicle market, with sales increasing yearly.

The choice to buy a single-rider ATV is based on the current laws, but what it really does is promote the carrying of passengers on an ATV built for one. These aftermarket seats put the passenger’s weight over and behind the rear wheels, and make front-end tip-overs a real threat.

From a safety point of view, the current law prohibits single riders from legally operating the longer and more

stable factory-built, two-person, longer-chassis ATVs, which are almost impossible to tip over backwards, one of the more common accidents occurring on a single-rider machine.

Side-by-sides equipped with roll cages, seat belts and a wide-stance wheel base are a much safer means of travel and off-roading for anyone. The fact that these much safer particular types of ATVs are currently illegal to operate on Ontario roads just doesn't make sense. Enabling multiple-passenger off-road riding helps to promote a far more family-friendly-oriented sport. With side-by-sides boasting up to four seats, this sport can truly become a family affair. Unlike family time in front of the TV or theatre screens, this is real: enjoying nature, exploring, learning and conversing with good, quality family time.

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How do we promote off-road tourism when not only are your family members separated on different machines, but the sheer cost of multiple machines is prohibitive in comparison to one four-seater side-by-side that the whole family can enjoy? The ATV is a very popular year-round utility and recreational vehicle that offers many hours of healthy, active enjoyment for outdoor enthusiasts. We must work together to change the current definition to properly reflect and include all of the off-road vehicles in the provincial legislation, because at the moment it discriminates against off-road enthusiasts in all parts of Ontario. The province promotes ATVing: "Ontario, Yours To Discover."

Including the two-up passenger ATVs and side-by-side off-road vehicles in Highway Traffic Act regulation 316/03 will realistically boost sales of the safer ATVs and reduce the risk of injury when carrying a passenger. These off-road machines have evolved; our legislation has not. We have to catch up. Let's not delay this motion any more. Let's move it forward so that many communities across Ontario, and families, can enjoy.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to support my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for bringing a private member's motion forward, representing his constituents in such good form. I believe that as a former mayor of Alexandria he has advocated strongly for his constituents for many years, as a consensus-builder but also as a strong advocate for many issues in his riding.

This private member's resolution will clearly clarify the rules, having positive impacts on tourism and the local economies of some of our smaller municipalities in this province. The current inconsistencies by which vehicles are being permitted to travel on the shoulders of which roads can be confusing. Furthermore, we know that when laws are confusing, they are more difficult to follow, and even more difficult to enforce by police officers.

As mentioned by the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, the current rules in Ontario are quite

different from those in Quebec. It is up to each municipality in Ontario to determine if and where off-road vehicles can drive on the shoulder of the road. I think it is important that this House provide some clarity for the owners and operators of these vehicles. This motion will bring Ontario in line with our neighbours in Quebec and provide consistent rules across this province.

Furthermore, we also allow similar types of vehicles, with all the same mechanics, to drive along the shoulder. It also makes sense to me to allow two-up and side-by-side vehicles the same privileges as single-rider ATVs. This also makes it easier for off-road vehicle operators and automobile drivers.

By making the rules the same for all of these vehicles, automobile drivers will be better able to predict the path of ATVs approaching the roadways. Currently, when the ATV approaches a roadway, by law it may either have to cross the road at a 90-degree angle, or it may be able to turn and run parallel to traffic on the shoulder. This is quite a concern in terms of safety. For automobile drivers who are not as familiar with the local rules and restrictions, this is creating more confusion.

We all know that our roadways are safer when drivers understand all the rules, and are able to follow the law and better predict the paths of other moving objects, pedestrians and vehicles around them. Making the rules consistent for these similar types of all-terrain vehicles will help motorists as well.

I know that communities in rural Ontario use ATVs and off-road vehicles for recreation, and also to help keep their local economies growing. We all know Ontario is rich and diverse with natural resources. It's also very vibrant and very beautiful. Often, Ontarians use ATVs to get to different parts of the province that are otherwise inaccessible. More importantly, farmers use ATVs to move more quickly and directly through their crops and fields. Because of this technology, local economies have grown and Ontarians are able to enjoy more fully the beauty of our province.

I'm very pleased to support this resolution brought forward by my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, as it will clarify the rules, remove any inconsistencies, improve safety on our roads and allow for further growth in tourism and in the economy in rural Ontario.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to stand and support this motion put forward today by the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell with regard to the legalization of the use of side-by-sides as off-road vehicles and changing the legislation to give them the same privileges as other ATVs.

This is something that has been an issue over the last several years, and I have advocated on many occasions to the ministry to make changes in this regard. Ever since they allowed the standard ATVs to have this access, this has been an issue, and the argument has always been that they didn't qualify under certain regulations. Well, this will change that regulation to allow that to happen.

If the argument is safety, then there is no argument. I don't think there's anybody out there who could possibly pretend that these vehicles would not be safer than standard ATVs. The way they're built—much broader, with a lower centre of gravity—they're far more safe from that point of view.

The province of Quebec has allowed this to take place. I think it's important that we recognize that not only has the issue of safety really been taken off the table, but it's one that everybody wants anyway. The industry wants to see it, the users want to see it, and it would have a significant economic benefit for all of us. It's only within the last few days that people would be aware that it's being debated today, but I have received a number of emails from people from my constituency asking us to support this, as they know I have over the years.

I believe this motion is going to pass today, and I'm happy for that. My request, then, to the government side is, don't let this issue collect dust. Don't let it die. You have the power to move this bill ahead. It doesn't do us any good with regard to what we're doing here today if it sits and collects dust. This is something that makes a whole lot of sense. There would be significant benefits, and the safety issues have long been dealt with. It is not an issue of safety whatsoever.

So my request to the members on the government side, to the people in the cabinet and to the Premier is, if this motion passes today—and I'm hopeful that it will—then move on with it. Move ahead and get this passed so that we can have an equal playing field with regard to ATVs here in the province of Ontario.

I know that a lot of the people who have sent emails in the last few days are out hunting this week, because it's hunting season, and I know my family is out hunting as well. The use of these vehicles in the bush is one thing, but having the ability to use them on the sides of roads, where prescribed, is something that would be extremely helpful to all of us. I hope that today the House would pass this motion and then it would get to committee to make any changes that would make the motion stronger, and then pass it into law so that we can do the right thing here in this assembly.

Again, I commend the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for bringing this to the House today.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It is indeed an honour to be able to stand today and support the motion by the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell regarding—and I'm not going to read the long legal term. Basically, from where I sit in northern Ontario, an ATV is something you straddle, it has handlebars, and that's legal. But when you put a steering wheel on it and you sit somebody beside it, it's not; it's a side-by-side. The problem with that is, everybody is using them, so a lot of people are breaking the law. That's a problem.

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When I was a farmer, I had one. I have a Polaris 500. It had a “slow moving” sign on the back and I was a

farmer and I could legally drive it. But now I'm not a farmer and now it's illegal. So there's something very wrong with that. Where my people get the most upset about this is you've got your 50-year-old couple, like the people in Virginiatown—the mayor of Virginiatown, Clermont Lapointe, and the council held a public meeting on this. It came through loud and clear. They just want to get from town to the bush, and where I live, you can do that. But when they do that, they are breaking the law, so there's something wrong there. There's really something wrong there.

Other people have been pushing on this: Paul Schoppmann, the mayor of St.-Charles, and Bill Enouy, the mayor of Kirkland Lake, on behalf of the Timiskaming Mayors' Action Group, pushing this really hard, and for a very good reason. It's part of our life in northern Ontario. The machines have evolved, and the law has to evolve with it.

For those people who think that petitions and stuff don't matter, petitions do, because we've been putting petitions. I've got a letter here from the Minister of Transportation. I'm going to read it. From April 30:

“I would like to thank the member for bringing forward the request of his constituents.

“Since single-rider ATVs were granted limited on-highway access in 2003, Ontario's collisions statistics continue to support the ministry's concerns with their on-road safety record. As a result”—April 30, 2013—“the ministry is not currently considering expanding the existing on-road access to additional off-road” vehicles. “This approach is also consistent with the positions of the public health community and major ORV manufacturers.”

I fully support the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I hope that all of us together can change the minister's mind. I agree with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that we have to keep the focus, the eye of the government, on this issue. But with that, I am very concerned, because the mayor of Kirkland Lake had a meeting at AMO specifically on this issue with the parliamentary assistant to the minister. Again, we fully support this motion, but we've got to keep the eye of the government. I would like to read the response to the mayor.

“Dear Mayor Enouy,

“Thank you for meeting with me at the Association of Municipalities (AMO) of Ontario 2013 annual conference....

“I sincerely appreciate you and the delegation from the town of Kirkland Lake taking the time to speak with me. On behalf of Minister Murray and myself, I want to say how much we look forward to working with you as we build a prosperous and fair Ontario.

“If you have any questions or would like to provide additional information”—they didn't even bother mentioning the issue. I would really like to thank the minister, when he gives a response, to actually mention the issue.

We'll support it, but please, push it within your caucus. Let's not just use it for an election stunt; let's actually get it done on behalf of the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Je suis heureux de prendre la parole aujourd'hui en faveur de la motion présentée par le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

I'm pleased to stand today to speak in support of the motion presented by the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I'd also like to thank him for his advocacy for his riding and for rural and agricultural issues. I know that he's following in some big footsteps from the former member, Jean-Marc Lalonde. He's doing a great job and he's a great local advocate for issues in his riding. He comes to our Ottawa caucus meetings, and every time he has got at least one or two coming up.

The motion we're discussing today proposes that the operation of off-road vehicles under the Highway Traffic Act, regulation 316/03, be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other ATVs and off-road vehicles. I believe this is a reasonable change.

As it currently stands, single-rider ATVs, a subset of the ORV, have limited on-road access. With the exception of 400-series highways, single-rider ATVs are permitted to ride along the shoulder of a highway in the same direction as the traffic. The Highway Traffic Act does not include two-up or side-by-side ATVs and other off-road vehicles. This can be limiting for riders, as the single-rider design does not allow for passengers or extra cargo. As a result, we have a patchwork of rules and regulations.

This motion will change that. It will modernize the Highway Traffic Act to include a new class of ORV. It will bring the Highway Traffic Act in line with the laws of the neighbouring province of Quebec. It will allow additional ORVs to access public roads in order to travel between recreational trails.

While this motion is about updating the Highway Traffic Act, it does so in a safe and responsible manner. According to the Ministry of Transportation, ATVs must be registered, display a clear rear licence plate and be insured under a motor vehicle liability policy. All drivers must wear appropriate safety equipment, such as a motorcycle helmet. Finally, only drivers who are at least 16 years of age and in possession of a valid driver's licence are permitted to drive their ATVs on public roads.

These same requirements will apply to this new class of vehicle under the proposed changes to the Highway Traffic Act. This ensures that both traditional and recreational ORV drivers will be kept safe.

Mr. Speaker, ATVs and ORVs have come a long way. They're a major recreational vehicle now. It's an activity that's shared by over one million Ontarians. I have received a number of emails at my office with regard to this. I received one just today from Adrian de Koning, an Ottawa South resident, asking me and my colleagues to

support this motion and for the ministry to put it to further study.

"I am a father of three boys," he says. "My wife and I enjoy off-road motorcycling in Limerick and Larose forests as well as the Calabogie region...."

"I support the Ontario Federation of Trail Riders and the Bytown Motorcycle Association. I encourage you all to consult them on issues this motion may raise."

Monsieur le Président, j'encourage tous les députés à appuyer cette motion.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to support this motion.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I, too, would like to lend my voice in supporting this motion. I'd like to thank the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for bringing this forward in his private member's slot.

I think it's also important to note that the member probably read one of our more recent white papers, and I'd like to thank our members from Parry Sound–Muskoka and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. In that white paper, we called for the Highway Traffic Act to be updated to actually accommodate off-road vehicles like ATVs; specifically, Argos, two-ups and side-by-sides. Of course, the member's bringing this forward is important, but I would like to thank those two caucus members too for bringing that forward only months ago.

Speaker, I don't know if you've had a chance to get out and drive or ride on one of these ATVs or two-ups before, but I can tell you, as we've heard in the House today, that Ontario has some of the best landscapes around the world to ride the finest trails, which we have in Ontario, with these fine vehicles. In fact, they're made right here in Ontario.

I'd like to spend a bit of time to talk about Ontario Drive and Gear. They reside in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, a major manufacturing employer in New Hamburg. They're better known as the manufacturer of the Argo.

I'll give you a brief history. Ontario Drive and Gear originated back in the 1960s, when they started manufacturing the Argo. In fact, they started in Kitchener, but they grew so large that they had to move out to the New Hamburg area, producing Argos throughout their history. The Argo is world-renowned for its versatility and capability in traversing difficult terrain, but in 2008, the challenge of our lives arrived: to help the Canadian Space Agency design a vehicle capable of withstanding the conditions on the moon—the lunar rover.

I spoke with ODG's chairman, Joerg Stieber, this morning and told him I'd be supporting this motion. But more importantly, last year, I had the honour of celebrating 50 great years of Ontario Drive and Gear manufacturing the Argo in Ontario. I'd like to thank Ontario Drive and Gear and their employees for the great work they've done over the last 50 years.

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I, too, have been contacted by many constituents in my riding, asking me to support this bill. Just this week,

Mark Jeffery from Kitchener, Rob Conlin, also from my riding in Kitchener, and then Keith Bowen, president of the Great Lakes ATV Club, asked that I would support this motion, which I definitely will do. In fact, a lot of them voiced their concerns about the regulation, and I'd like to take the time to thank them for writing and emailing me on this important issue.

The two-seater ATVs are arguably a lot safer—like an Argo. They allow each passenger to have a place to sit properly instead of squeezing two people on the back of a one-seater.

We need to make these rules fair. We hear a lot about a fair Ontario; well, I think that this is a step in the right direction. Of course, not only for pleasure—as ATV or Argo riders will welcome this much-needed change, and we ask that the government actually now move forward with the change. It also will help businesses, farmers, golf courses, agribusinesses, and recreational facilities like hunting camps, campgrounds and amusement parks make better use of these side-by-sides. Especially with warmer winter months, businesses and recreational riders are able to ride their ATVs year-round.

For companies like Ontario Drive and Gear in New Hamburg and other manufacturers across this province, I'm sure that this will actually increase production of these vehicles and create good-paying jobs.

Again, I'd ask the government to speed up the adoption of the motion. It has been 10 years too long. You have my support on this private member's motion ensuring that we make the rules across the province fair.

Thanks, Speaker, for allowing me to provide my comments on this motion today.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It is, as always, an honour for me to rise in my place here in this chamber to speak on a particular motion that's being put forward, and to not only stand to speak on this but to stand to speak to something that—from the debate that has taken place or the discussion or the dialogue that has taken place here in the chamber today is an initiative brought forward by my colleague the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, a motion, an idea, a concept, that has such broad support in this House.

Everyone else who spoke prior to me rising today has spoken very eloquently about the technical merit that exists in this particular motion. There are a couple of other things that I guess I wanted to bring to the discussion or to the debate this afternoon.

What I heard loud and clear from the members on the opposite side of the House was that while there is significant support both today and also historically for what the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has brought forward to us today, they want to make sure that those of us on this side of the House don't lose sight of how important it is to not just talk about it today but to seek—to continue to advocate—to support it here today, and to support this member, my colleague, our colleague and this initiative, but also to continue to advocate for this particular position.

I guess before I address anything specific in the motion itself, I want to say to those who may be watching from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell or others who may be watching from other parts of Ontario, and I know that all of my colleagues on this side of the House would definitely agree, that in my time over the last 13 months as an MPP, I don't believe that I have seen anyone who is a more adamant, a more effective advocate, not only for his own community but also for issues that affect communities like Glengarry–Prescott–Russell right across the province of Ontario.

If there is nothing else that I accomplish in my brief comments this afternoon, I want to make sure that those watching, those listening, those who might review this in Hansard after the fact know—because this is an issue that does provoke a great deal of passion and emotion in parts all across Ontario—and also, to the members opposite: You can rest assured that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will not rest until other folks on this side of the House understand how important this measure is. It's why this motion deserves the support that, I understand from the comments that we've heard thus far, it will receive today, but it's also why it's important to continue to support this member, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, as he continues to advance this cause, as he continues to talk about this issue.

He recognizes, as someone who spoke very eloquently today about how this is something that has impacted his own life and his relationship with his father and his relationship with his son, like it has for the members who spoke on this side and other sides of the House—it is very, very clear to those of us who are here today hearing the comments made by all members of all parties about why this is such an important motion to support, why the motion itself deserves support and why this particular member deserves the support of everyone here in the House today.

I just want to say again: I don't have any doubt, whether it's in our caucus meetings, whether it's in the hallway, whatever the case may be in this building, that this particular member is someone who, time and time again, is always ready to stand up and be counted on those issues that are important to communities like Alexandria, like others in his community, but also across the rest of eastern Ontario and, frankly, across the rest of rural Ontario. He is indeed a champion.

With respect to the actual merits of the motion itself, I'm sure members all around this House will understand that there are a number of municipalities that are extremely supportive. Over 90 rural municipalities are supportive of this motion and this concept: for example, the municipality of Kincardine, the county of Lennox and Addington, the municipality of Central Huron, the municipality of Huron East, the municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, the township of Faraday, the Corporation of the Township of Huron-Kinloss, Grey county, and I know there are many, many others.

Also, I believe the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell referenced this in his opening remarks on this

motion: This is an undertaking that also has the very strong and fervent endorsement of the Ontario Power Sports Working Group. Here's the actual official endorsement quote from that particular organization, which I'd like to briefly read into the record:

"The Ontario Power Sports Working Group is pleased to see the off-road vehicle and power sports industry recognized by the Ontario government. Recently, we have many opportunities before it, including the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's consultation efforts to strengthen the Ontario Trails Strategy.

"With steps like these being taken to improve the sector, such as Mr. Crack's motion 48, we will be better able to provide fun, healthy and safe opportunities for recreation and economic opportunity. This is an appreciated step in the right direction for ATV enthusiasts, and a great step forward for the power sport sector."

Everyone here today, from the comments we've heard, I expect will be supporting this motion, all deserved because of the hard work of the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, you have two minutes.

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Algoma–Manitoulin, Scarborough–Agincourt, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Ottawa South, Kitchener–Conestoga and Vaughan. I didn't think I would get this wonderful support, because this was an issue that was dear to my heart, as I had mentioned in my opening 12-minute remarks. I'm really enthusiastic as to the support that I've heard from all three parties here today.

I can tell you, this is an issue about rural Ontario, but it's also another issue: that there's one Ontario. I was able to speak with a gentleman who had a 1-647 number two days ago, and I thought, "Well, that's a Toronto number, a GTA number." Sure enough, it was, but when I asked him if I was bothering him when I called, he said, "No, I'm in a tree stand near Kincardine"—or Woodstock; it was one of the two. It's a perfect indication that it's not only rural Ontarians that support this particular motion. Urban Ontarians who love to go to the country, who love to go to their cottages, who love to go hunting could certainly benefit by this regulation change.

I look forward, with the support of my colleagues who have worked on this in the past as well, to continuing to have discussions with the Minister of Transportation. Hopefully we will be able to make this regulatory change sooner than later, following today's debate and today's vote. Hopefully this will pass and we will get some response from the minister as soon as possible.

Thank you very much, everyone. Thanks to my colleagues on both sides of the House. I encourage everybody to keep up the good work on behalf of all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

ONTARIO FORESTRY INDUSTRY REVITALIZATION ACT (HEIGHT OF WOOD FRAME BUILDINGS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA REVITALISATION DE L'INDUSTRIE FORESTIÈRE DE L'ONTARIO (HAUTEUR DES BÂTIMENTS À OSSATURE DE BOIS)

Mr. Fedeli moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to the height of wood frame buildings /
Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait à la hauteur des bâtiments à ossature de bois.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's my great pleasure to again be introducing Bill 13, the Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act, on behalf of the forest industry and on behalf of all of northern Ontario.

1530

Forestry, as you know, is a vital part of the northern economy, and it has been hit hard over the past decade. Over the past several years, some 60 lumber mills have closed across the north. That's 80% of all mills and 10,000 resource sector jobs that have disappeared. It is my hope that this bill will help reverse the damage that has been done and help kick-start a revival in the forestry sector of northern Ontario.

The Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act would amend the Ontario building code to permit wood-framed multi-use buildings to be constructed up to six storeys instead of the current four storeys. This seemingly small change could provide a tremendous boost to the forestry industry by increasing domestic demand for lumber, supporting 200,000 jobs and stimulating 103 forestry-dependent communities, primarily in the north.

Last March, when I first introduced this legislation, I was joined here at Queen's Park by Jim Lopez, president of Tembec, one of Canada's premier forestry companies; Mr. Michael Giroux, president of the Canadian Wood Council; and Marianne Berube, Ontario executive director for Wood WORKS!.

Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that Marianne Berube is here in the gallery supporting this again this year. I want to offer her thanks, but I also want to let you know that Wood WORKS!, the organization that Marianne heads up, promotes the use of wood to not only builders but to architects and to engineers who have seen, worldwide, the use of wood grow. We've seen much acknowledgment of its success and many awards worldwide, not only for Wood WORKS! but for the buildings that have been created from northern Ontario's wood.

It was extremely pleasing also, Speaker, to see members from all three parties support my legislation last year on second reading. I thank them again. It's the right thing to do because all of Ontario can benefit, as I will

explain, and my hope is that this House will again express its all-party support for this bill here today.

We have worked very closely for a long time with the industry to develop this legislation. For that reason, it does not promote the use of one construction material over another but rather focuses on the tangible benefits this change could offer to all of Ontario. Since then, much technical work has been done to move this idea forward.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association has recognized the merits of this idea and this legislation and is formally endorsing passage here today. In an email containing their letter of support, which was sent to all members, they state, "The Ontario Home Builders' Association welcomes the opportunity to work with architects, designers, building officials and fire services throughout a technical Ontario building code process to bring this safe and affordable new housing option to Ontario." Their letter also notes that six-storey wood frame construction has both the support of the chief planner and the chief building official of the city of Toronto.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association believes this legislation presents opportunities for Ontario municipalities to help "rejuvenate their downtowns and their main streets with safe, affordable and community-appropriate projects that can serve the local community needs, from student housing to transit-oriented condominiums and new, purpose-built rentals."

They also state, "It is time to bring this option to Ontario," and they look forward to working with all the stakeholders throughout the OBC technical sessions to "ensure these buildings are safe for both the occupants and the fire services."

The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities also supports this. They stated, "These changes will expand the role of wood in mid-rise construction, providing significant social, economic and environmental benefits to the province and its people without compromising safety."

Recent research has been done by the national research council and FPInnovations to support upcoming changes for the national building codes, ensuring that building six-storey wood frame buildings will be safe. We're hoping for early adoption of the national codes in Ontario.

FONOM also states, "The increased use of wood has the potential to sustain current jobs and provide an opportunity to create new ones; to encourage investment and innovation into new processes and technologies; and contribute to the economic prosperity of," in their case, northeastern Ontario.

Now the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, NOMA, also is backing Bill 13. President Dave Canfield wrote, "We fully support Bill 13 for proposed changes to the Ontario building code by adopting the national code changes for six-storey wood construction as soon as possible. We will ensure that wood has a fair playing field, providing economic opportunities for all of us."

The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce previously expressed support for this legislation and brought for-

ward a resolution with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which read, "That the Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the government to give its full support for the proposed changes to the Ontario building code regarding the use of wood in mid-rise construction, and urges that the proposed changes be incorporated into the revised edition of the Ontario building code."

Speaker, as you can see, my bill has broad support across northeastern and northwestern Ontario and from the important industrial forestry partners here in southern Ontario. As you may be aware, the submission period for changes to the national building code ends next month. That means there will be no further reason to wait to act. We can move forward with this on January 1, 2014. The forestry industry needs this support and if we don't move ahead, we risk falling behind other jurisdictions like BC, where work on this bill is proceeding rapidly. Bill 13 will fast-track the process. Again, in BC, they have passed this within nine months, and they are now building multi-storey wood buildings.

My bill will also allow Ontario to respond to lower export demand for its softwood lumber and stimulate the forestry sector in the north by creating tariff-free local markets. Ontario's softwood lumber industry is reliant on the housing sector, with between 60% and 70% of provincial production currently being exported to the United States. But with Ontario's population projected to rise by nearly 35% by 2036, the demand for more higher-density, multi-family residential buildings will continue to increase. Market experts estimate that the mid-rise sector could represent 8% to 10% of the entire multi-storey market in Ontario in the next 20 years, up from 3% today.

As well, through the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Places to Grow Act, Ontario and almost all municipalities are committed to reducing urban sprawl. By 2015, at least 40% of all residential development in the greater Golden Horseshoe must be built on land already designated for residential or commercial use. The Toronto Star just yesterday reported on provincial growth policies to control sprawl being compromised. This bill can help address that very issue.

As I mentioned earlier, British Columbia is already seeing the benefit of changes to allow more wood construction in their mid-rise buildings. BC enacted their Wood First Act in 2009 and fast-tracked changes to its building code in 2009. It took them nine months. That's all it took to allow wood frame construction for up to six storeys. Since then, the incorporation of wood frame structures in the building code has created over 280 buildings as new housing options for thousands of students, families and others in British Columbia. Now Quebec is moving strongly in this direction as well. On a market scale, introducing a wood frame option has made building mid-rise structures considerably more cost-effective.

The increased consumption of lumber brought about by this bill will stimulate Ontario's forestry sector in response to the economic weakness and decreased

demand from the United States. My Bill 13 will create jobs and growth in northern Ontario communities dependent on forestry while reducing construction costs and helping southern Ontario meet targets to reduce urban sprawl. Wood frame construction will also reduce the carbon footprint and increase the energy efficiency of mid-rise buildings.

Speaker, this is a win-win-win-win situation.

1540

I come from the city of North Bay, in the riding of Nipissing. We have 66 manufacturing companies within our community. Mattawa, Powassan, Trout Creek and others are all heavily dependent on the wood sector. We have seen Mattawa devastated by various things, including the Far North Act and Bill 151. Men and women from Mattawa need to go out to the Alberta oil sands to find work, and the families are left with one parent at home.

This is a wonderful opportunity to bring back the forestry sector, bring life back to those 103 communities like Mattawa that are dependent on the forestry sector. This is an opportunity for those 10,000 resource-based jobs that have been lost throughout northern Ontario and an opportunity for those 60 communities devastated by the loss in the forestry sector.

In closing, Speaker, I want to reiterate that we will respond to the concerns of all the stakeholders. This is no longer a political debate, it's a technical one, and I invite those with concerns to bring forward their technical data and evidence so we can make sure all of their concerns are adequately addressed. The Ontario building code is built on technical data, not politics and not rhetoric.

Again, I want to thank all the parties for supporting my bill last year, and it is my hope that members of all parties, especially my colleagues from northern Ontario, will indeed support Bill 13 in the Legislature today so it can receive proper scrutiny in committee.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of this bill. The NDP does support initiatives that will aid the forest industry in Ontario. There have been many other jurisdictions, not just in Canada but also across the world, that have also used wood successfully in mid-rise buildings, and I think that we should be looking at ways to improve our building code, as well.

As the member from Nipissing just mentioned, action is required to aid the forest industry and the job crisis that we've had for many years now in northern Ontario. In northern Ontario, we've lost about 40,000 jobs, which has decimated entire communities, and we are now seeing a comeback. We've been seeing this for the past several months, where we're hearing some positive news out of some communities, communities in my riding like Ear Falls. We're also hearing some positive rumblings in places like Kenora. I think creating some changes that will increase demand for some of the products that we're making, some of the value-added products as well, will only serve to help our forest industry.

It should be mentioned that wood frame buildings are already widely used in North America for single-family housing, but in non-residential—industrial, commercial, institutional and multi-family construction sectors—there are some environmental and economic gains that are possible through more intensive use of wood products in these types of constructions.

As I said, other jurisdictions and provinces have taken similar action, so this is not something that hasn't been done before; it's not something that's untested. For instance, Sweden passed legislation allowing wood frame construction in apartments in the early 1990s, and that has helped them to support a strong domestic wood industry. In France, they have the wood construction environment plan, which aims to increase the market share of wood in construction by 25%. There are also other examples, whether it's BC or other places.

So, in addition to increasing demand for wood, this bill could also likely benefit the environment, and I think that's something that needs to be mentioned, especially whenever we're talking about our forest industry and the products that we make as a result of forestry. As I said, the bill could benefit the environment, since the use of wood in construction, as opposed to steel or concrete, would require less energy and would therefore release fewer greenhouse gases. Just to kind of bring that point home, using one cubic metre of wood, instead of the equivalent amount of concrete or steel directly, contributes to the reduction of about one metric tonne of greenhouse gas emissions—the CO₂ equivalent.

There are some limitations of the bill, though, and I'd like to take a couple of minutes to talk about those. First, it needs to be mentioned that there are some Ontario firefighters, including the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario, who have expressed some concern that the increased height of multi-storey wood frame buildings will increase fire-related risks to firefighters, occupants and the public. Specifically, their concerns have been raised about the reliability of fire resistance, fire safety during construction, the ability to evacuate, wood shrinkage and the possible breach of firewalls, in addition to some other things that are related to that, including local emergency response time.

But there are some things that could be done—for instance, the inclusion of sprinkler systems. If those were to be put in and done hand in hand, we could minimize some of those risks. That's something that AMO has suggested as well, again, that these fire risks can be mitigated by incorporating sprinklers.

Of course, one of the things that I think needs to be mentioned, just because it could be a little misleading otherwise, is that there also isn't a buy-Ontario component to this bill. That's something that I think would help our forest industry probably more than anything else in this bill. We want to encourage people to buy and use wood, not just for the sake of buying and using wood, but also to make sure that there's a direct correlation between the increased wood that we incorporate in our new construction or remodelling—but also that that is

correlating with good jobs that are right here at home in Ontario.

So all in all, as I said, I'm pleased to stand here in support of this bill. I'm going to allow my other northern colleagues a few minutes to weigh in on this bill.

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

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to join today's debate in the Legislature on this bill and the discussion of how we find a balance between building cost, construction and public safety.

As was stated earlier, the building code currently allows for buildings four storeys or less to be constructed with a wood frame. This bill, if passed, would allow wood frames to be used in buildings of up to six storeys instead of four.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Nipissing for bringing this bill forward because I think it's an important issue that we should debate. This is a conversation that my own ministry has been actively working on for the past two years, so I welcome the participation of all my colleagues in the House in debating this important issue.

In 2010 and 2011, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing conducted extensive consultations on potential changes to the building code, including the potential requirements for mid-rise wood frame construction. At the time, we heard from a number of our partners how the opportunity for mid-rise wood frame construction could bring a new level of interest to the Ontario market.

Northern municipalities, in particular, are looking for ways to increase jobs and growth by expanding the forestry industry, but we also heard from stakeholders like firefighters who cautioned us not to ignore public safety. They told us that more research was needed before we took the step of moving from four storeys to six storeys, and that is what I think is the greatest flaw of this private member's bill. At the end of the day, the bill doesn't address something that's important to firefighters and homeowners—safety. This bill could pose significant safety issues for both residents and our emergency responders, so it does require further debate.

I'm not sure about the opposition, but our government's priority is to make sure Ontarians are safe in their homes and businesses and that first responders have the support they need when they answer the call to come to our homes and protect us.

I want to be clear: I'm not opposed to the principle of Bill 13. In fact, I think there's merit in examining more affordable methods of building, and our forestry industry will certainly benefit from these proposed changes. If done carefully, allowing six-storey mid-rise wood buildings would continue strengthening northern Ontario's forestry industry. In fact, I would go so far as to say that having a sensible policy on mid-rise wood construction would potentially help our province and help our cities and towns grow in a sustainable way. These proposed changes could also potentially reduce the cost of housing

for many Ontarians, as using wood often reduces the cost of homes in comparison with other materials. And with our large tracts of forest in the north, we have an affordable, homegrown solution to the growing need for mid-rise housing. But we're not there yet.

That's why my ministry is supporting a National Research Council study looking at the use of wood in mid-rise wood construction of up to six storeys. We expect that evidence, the NRC report, to be available to us in the early spring of 2014.

1550

So despite the importance of these changes, I believe the bill is premature, and this point is important, because we need to make sure we don't leave first responders vulnerable to risks that could easily be mitigated. I'm prepared to wait until the findings of the NRC are released.

We have an obligation to ensure that any decisions we make take safety first into consideration. That said, despite the serious concerns I have about the member's bill, mid-rise wood construction does present an important opportunity for the forestry industry, the construction industry and Ontario homebuyers.

I look forward to continuing this important debate with the member from Nipissing, because we believe that jobs and the economy remain our government's focus, but that should not come at the expense of the lives of Ontarians or our emergency services. However, as I mentioned earlier, since I agree with the principle of this bill, I think it's important to have the discussion in balancing the effects of safety while promoting growth in our communities.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: When I chose to run for elected office, I was guided by a clear principle that individuals, businesses, municipalities and other key players that ensure the quality of life we know today must be free to choose the means by which they achieve their goals. I am therefore very pleased to rise to speak in support of this bill, because it creates greater choice in the determination of building materials and urban density.

As the population of Ontario grows and many families move to the suburbs, the issue of sprawl has been on the minds of many urban planners. We must find new ways to accommodate the public's right to choose where they live and raise their families, with our commitment to preserving Ontario's natural and agricultural heritage for future generations.

Bill 13 provides a greater range of options for developers, who will be able to use their own tariff-free, job-creating Ontario wood to build higher-density affordable housing. Ontario wood creates jobs in the north, where the population stands to benefit the most from the region's economic development. Because it is sourced internally, it is not subject to the whim of other provinces or countries. Wood is truly one of Ontario's greatest resources.

The safety of wood-frame buildings is now ensured for many years—and there is still work being done—by a

tight and safe building code; the invention of new fire-resistant materials, coatings and films; and innovations in the fire-extinguishing sector, with new and better sprinklers. Ontario's wood has provided safe and sustainable building material for generations of Ontarians.

This bill will enable us to use wood to its full potential by building higher-density residential areas with wood-frame buildings. This will naturally reduce pressures on those municipalities that are seeing their populations grow, requiring more serviced land for new subdivisions. With higher wood-frame buildings, they can build higher, safer and cheaper rather than building out with more of the same design.

Furthermore, as we become more environmentally conscious, we have to remind ourselves that the construction industry sources many raw materials with a high carbon footprint and does not have the option to use wood for many developments because of current building code limitations. By giving developers and municipalities a choice to use a renewable, sustainable, low-carbon-footprint source such as wood, we give every player in the construction industry an opportunity to contribute to a better and healthier environment while creating jobs where they are so desperately needed.

Modern safety technology has simply made the prohibition of wood-frame buildings taller than four storeys obsolete. We need to pass this bill for the sake of northern Ontario and for the sake of the many families throughout Ontario who need good, safe, affordable housing but cannot find any. Wood is our under-appreciated treasure, so let's use it to its full potential.

It is once again time to reassess the science and bring our building code into the 21st century. We all know that the cost of living under this government has grown by leaps and bounds, and is becoming unaffordable to the point where job creators and youth are simply crying uncle and leaving our province for greener pastures. Once again, this government missed an opportunity to change direction today, with their economic update, to put Ontario first. I believe it's time to change direction, time for the passage of this bill and time to start a new, affordable Ontario.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to stand today and be in full support of the bill, put forward by the member for Nipissing, regarding looking into making wood a building material for buildings up to six storeys. It provides us with an excellent opportunity to talk about the great industry that is the forestry industry. It's gone through a tough, tough time for the last few years, but I believe it's turning the corner, and it has a great story to tell.

I'd like to start by talking about—just for a moment—Goulard Lumber in Sturgeon Falls, in my riding. They won the green business award from the chamber of commerce, and that's indicative of the lumber industry. I've got mills in Cochrane, Kirkland Lake and Elk Lake, but the great thing about the lumber industry is that it's sustainable.

I'm a farmer. I'm not in the lumber industry, but I understand it, because the only real difference is that the growing cycle is longer. Considering all the problems we've had lately with aggregate resources, the mega quarry and all those things, wood just keeps on growing. It's good for the economy, but it's good for the environment.

I'm going to be very short, but something else that this bill could do is, it will make the cost of ownership or to rent a home more affordable. That's something that we have constantly been pushing for: to make things more affordable for the average person out there. This bill has the potential to do that, because if we can make homes more affordable, it'll be better for everyone—not only more affordable, but more environmentally friendly as homes and, quite frankly, as safe as or safer than a lot of other products.

That's something we have to make sure that we look into. There are concerns out there, and part of our job is to make sure that the concerns are met. But we have to move this forward so we have a chance to look at those concerns, because so many good things could come out of this that we cannot afford—not for my riding and not for the people who would have the chance to live in these fine buildings.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 13, the Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act. It's really, basically, trying to take wood construction limitations from four storeys up to six storeys.

I'm pleased to add my comments as a civil engineer and as someone who has looked at—this is about jobs, and this is about the environment. It also is about safety, and I think we have people who are trying to get changes made in the building code. Wood-frame buildings have to meet the same standards as those built using other materials; I think that's what's being done.

I was invited to the National Fire Laboratory—I think that's what it's called—in Ottawa, and it was quite an experience. They had a controlled fire of a two-storey home, and they were measuring the temperatures and all that. It's quite a laboratory, and it's worth going to. I think the National Research Council's building section runs that, and I understand that our province is co-operating with them in the research that's being done with getting this new legislation through.

I commend the member for bringing this forward. I think it's really something that is good. We went around the province looking for affordable housing solutions. I remember that when I went with Jim Watson, the minister at the time, we held hearings in Ottawa. We were looking for solutions. This is one of them.

I understand that a 1,000-square-foot building, which is a small unit, can be built for about \$20,000 less if we can get into wood construction, so it's very much worth doing. I understand where the minister comes from, that we have to safeguard the emergency people that come to these buildings. With all the new materials etc., it's certainly more complex for them and it's more difficult.

So we have to make sure that that fire safety is in place for both the people that are dwelling there and the people that have to deal with these fires.

I'm glad to support this. One of the things that I wanted to mention—it was mentioned by one of the members before. It's certainly a green product, an environmentally good product. It doesn't require all of the fossil fuel inputs that steel does. It's much lower, from a point of construction, from operation, from greenhouse gas emissions.

We've gone, this summer, beyond 400 parts per million in our atmosphere with greenhouse gases, and nobody seems to be getting too concerned about it. Canada is not near meeting their targets. Ontario is not meeting their targets. No country appears to be meeting their targets. Sometimes the Chinese can't go out and even see anything. Those are the emissions that stay on the ground, the smog and the breathing problems, but what's going up in the air is colourless—the CO₂ is colourless—and we seem to forget that.

1600

It's very much worth pushing this, just from an environmental point of view, a jobs point of view and certainly the lower cost to provide housing for people.

I'm pleased to stand here today and say that we should, as a Legislature, push this as quickly as possible and make sure the safety standards are met and that the fire departments across the province have seen that the solutions are there. We'll certainly be doing something for the environment and doing something for lower-cost housing, which is extremely important, and jobs in the north—jobs are so important. Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 13 and, as the northern development and mines critic for the PC Party, to offer my support for this bill.

I would like to welcome to the Legislature Marianne Berube, who's with Wood WORKS! Ontario and who is in the members' west lounge. Welcome, Marianne. I note that they have their awards night, which is happening next week in Toronto. I attended it a few years ago, and the Charles W. Stockey Centre and the Bobby Orr Hall of Fame, which is located in Parry Sound, was one of the winners. Having attended that night, it is impressive to see what is made from wood and all the engineered wood products that are out there.

I think it's important to support this bill for the sake of the forestry sector in Ontario, especially in northern Ontario. We've seen more than 60 lumber mills close and thousands of forestry jobs disappear in the past decade. This bill will support the forestry industry in Ontario, which already supports some 200,000 jobs and more than 100 forestry-dependent communities.

I only have a short time to speak, so I'll try to go quickly, but allowing wood construction for six-storey buildings will also provide an affordable alternative for families. The estimate is a 10% to 15% savings for families. The cost savings on a 1,000-square-foot unit could average \$20,000 to \$25,000. That's from a report

written for BILD and the Ontario Home Builders' Association.

Other jurisdictions are doing this. Quebec allows six-storey buildings. BC allows six-storey buildings. There's actually a 10-storey wooden building being built in Australia. Sweden has seven-storey wooden buildings.

There are studies. The fire aspect is certainly something that should be studied. There are studies in BC, for example, done by Dr. Joseph Clare of the University of the Fraser Valley and Surrey, BC, Fire Chief Len Garis, that point out that, with the proper exterior cladding and sprinklers even on balconies—basically, their conclusion was: “The researchers have examined these concerns” about fire risk “and are unable to find evidence to substantiate these concerns.” So they can be safe with the right technical standards.

As has been pointed out, there are certainly environmental benefits to having more wood construction. A typical 2,400-square-foot wood-framed house has over 28 tonnes of carbon dioxide sequestered within the wood building materials products used in the construction of the building. That is the equivalent to the carbon dioxide emissions from a single-passenger car driven for seven years, or 12,500 litres of gasoline burned, or the energy costs to operate the house for almost four years. Obviously, there are some very significant environmental benefits.

This bill is supported by many different organizations, including the Ontario Home Builders' Association. They, in fact, had a reception and a day here at Queen's Park yesterday. When I went to that and asked what their most important issue was, they said they were supporting six-storey wood frame construction buildings and the benefits for families in the province, the benefits for their industry and the benefits for the forestry sector. But it's also supported by organizations like FONOM, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, and NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association—those organizations recognizing the benefits for northern Ontario in particular.

I'm pleased to support this bill. I do hope that it passes, goes to committee and gets the required input from concerned stakeholders so the technical aspects of it are addressed properly. I look forward to this passing and becoming the law in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's with great pride that I stand, as a prior forestry employee for a very long time. I built my life, I built my first house, I had my first mortgage and I raised my kids as a forester working in the forestry. That's how I was raised. It's basically who I am, as an individual.

When I see bills like this, Bill 13—and I hope that number is not a telltale of where this bill is going to end up. I commend the member from Nipissing for being tireless on this issue and bringing it forward. I definitely will be supporting this bill.

I'm going to bring a different aspect to the discussion today, in the limited time that I have. We talked a little

bit about how this is an affordable method, something that would make it a little bit easier, or more affordable, for communities and businesses in order to build these six-storey structures. We talked a little bit about the economics of it. We also talked about the environmental benefits.

But what it means to me is something that I've experienced over and over and over again in communities ranging from Manitouwadge to White River, Pic Mobert, Wawa, Chapleau, all along the North Shore, all along my riding: When a mill shuts down—particularly, the one that comes to mind is Dubreuilville—and they lose the one industry that they have in their community, it's devastating to families, it's devastating to the community and it's devastating to the region.

What you have to understand—something that I'm always going to bring here is a northern perspective—is that a lot of these communities are so tied into each other. A lot of them count on each other, although they're separated by, to our standards, short distances—roughly anywhere between 100 and 150 kilometres. That's close. That's an opportunity for a job and for me to work.

It's unfortunate that some of these policies, like this one here that we're talking about today, were not in place back then, when I went through, like everybody else in 2007—when the forestry industry really took a turn for the worse.

When you look at families that were basically devastated, where a husband and a wife were separated, due to the loss of these jobs that they had within the forestry sector, and where kids were taken away from their homes, that was where a policy like this would potentially have helped out.

Of course, I'm going to stand here today and support this initiative because, yes, within the last few months, within the last year or so, we can see a turn in the forestry industry. Things are coming around; things are changing; things are looking up. You hear of good-news stories, and I'll share a good-news story. The White River sawmill has just recently reopened, hiring approximately 60 people now. They're looking at establishing a second shift for that particular mill.

We had huge investment in the community of Hornepayne, where there was a biomass project that was developed there. Millions of dollars were spent there in order to sustain that particular mill and secure it.

The community of Wawa, although they lost their OSB plant, will be getting an industrial pelletization plant, which is going to be good for that community. It's not going to return the 125 jobs that were there, but it is going to return probably about 40 to 50 jobs, which are going to be able to sustain that community.

There is good news that is coming, and something like this bill will help those communities, those industries, to secure their future in order to find the markets that they're going to need to sustain those jobs in those communities.

It's also going to provide an opportunity for the communities that are looking to secure wood, for them to move forward.

Again, I'll go back to a community like Dubreuilville. Unfortunately, they're one of the ones that have been left out. They don't have a forestry licence, and they don't have the opportunity to open up that mill yet. But I know they're still trying to get going. That's the one thing about that community: "No" has never been an option to them, and they're going to continue trying to secure their fibre.

I commend the member for bringing this bill forward. Like I said, I hope the title of it, Bill 13, is not a telltale of where this bill is going to go. I encourage this government to push it forward.

1610

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure today to speak to Bill 13, the Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act, and I'd like to thank the member from Nipissing for bringing this forward. I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan's original bill from 2012, entitled Bill 61, Ontario's Wood First Act, 2012. I believe that in both of these bills there are important principles that deserve our support. However, in supporting the initiative, I think we have to strike the right balance.

Bill 13 would amend the building code to allow construction of mid-rise buildings of up to six storeys. Allowing mid-rise wood buildings would be advantageous for both the wood industry and northern Ontario municipalities reliant on the industry. We agree, and believe this bill will have a positive impact on the forestry industry in Ontario.

Ontario's forestry sector reaches deep into our economy, creating thousands of jobs and building the local economies of more than 260 communities. Wood products are better for the environment than other major building materials. They consume less energy across their life cycle, contribute less to pollution and have a lighter carbon footprint.

Ontario's forests are managed to ensure the long-term health of the forest ecosystems while balancing the environmental, economic and social benefits, both now and in the future. The bill is not only about improving the forestry sector; it is about promoting smart growth.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of meeting with Pierre Dufresne, the president of the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association. His organization strongly supports the bill. He tells me that builders could save as much as 15% to 20% on the cost of the buildings. It would also provide for more affordable accommodations for families, more space for families. I think these changes are necessary to help kick-start mid-rise development of vacant lands and under-used lands in urban corridors, like in the city of Ottawa or the greater Golden Horseshoe.

Wood could become the natural choice for many mid-rise projects, and the province's wood industry would see an almost immediate increase in demand for its products. It will also allow for higher-density municipalities. As a result, families will benefit from the reduced cost and larger living spaces. The same type of legislation is found

in British Columbia, Quebec, Scandinavia and in numerous American states.

While I support the intent and the principles in Bill 13, our government has to make sure that we take care of the safety of Ontarians and that they're safe in their homes and in their businesses. In 2010 and 2011, when we consulted on our 2012 building code, we received a mixed reaction regarding the potential of increasing the limit on wood-frame buildings to six storeys. That is why our government is working with the National Research Council, providing a \$345,000 grant to research the use of wood in mid-rise construction.

We understand that these proposed changes could result in a boost to the forestry industry and reduce housing costs for Ontarians. We must ensure that the building code promotes growth while balancing high safety standards. Our government is always looking for flexible, innovative and affordable options for construction in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to support Bill 13. Like I said, I think we need to get a proper balance in the bill. I'm glad to support it going forward to committee. I'd like to thank the member for Nipissing for introducing this bill, and once again I would like to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for his continued work on this initiative as well.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak in favour of this bill. I know that this is something that the member from Nipissing has really had his arms wrapped around since day one, and it's very important to him and his community, as it is for most of northern Ontario and certainly other places in Ontario that depend on the wood industry and the lumber industry for jobs.

It is interesting that the increased use of wood harvested in northern Ontario for residential construction will produce a lot more jobs. We've seen 60 lumber mills close and thousands and thousands of jobs lost over the last decade or two. It is an interesting point to think that as, I think, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane noted, it is a renewable resource. It is a slower renewable, but I think with proper planning and with responsible stewardship, it is a highly renewable resource that, if we manage it well, can actually be a great piece of our economy.

This bill not only will help the forest industry, but it has spinoff on the other industries that it helps. So not only does it help those cutting down the trees, but it helps those who are processing the lumber and it helps those who are selling the lumber or reselling the lumber and all the construction industries that are going to be building, if they didn't have lumber to use as a material before for six-storey buildings.

There are going to be lots of jobs that can be created through this bill, which is a relatively simple bill, really. These are the kinds of bills that I love because they are so simple in what they do, yet really very extreme in what they can produce. We know that wood frame construction actually reduces the carbon footprint and increases

energy efficiency in mid-rise buildings. They actually meet or surpass fire standards if they're built properly, with the proper codes and the proper technology. That's kind of an argument that takes the wind out of the sails of some of the people who might say there are some issues with the fire standards here. There certainly aren't, not if building codes are met and the proper technologies are used.

By allowing and encouraging construction of these wood frame buildings, Ontario can also respond to lower export demand for its softwood lumber and stimulate the industry in the north by creating tariff-free local markets. So we're going to have more local markets. If we allow them to use more wood to build up to six-storey buildings, it decreases the price of some of these buildings and will actually increase the amount of them that are being built, and allow them to be built, too, in denser populated areas where we need to build density—in the hearts of our cities.

It's interesting, too, that the bill is supported by so many different groups: the Ontario Home Builders' Association, FONOM, NOMA. I know I talked to the Barrie Construction Association about this, and this is something that they would wholeheartedly support. Certainly Barrie is a place where density is a big deal. We are trying to not have the same issues with sprawl as other cities that have grown as rapidly as ours, and this will really help with the affordability of housing within our city core. Certainly, that's the place where we need to attract people to live, to keep healthy cities, so our cities don't rot from the inside out, especially smaller cities like North Bay that need to make sure they don't make the same mistakes as many other cities have as they've grown rapidly over the past several years. This will help achieve all that.

At the same time—you know, we can talk about affordable housing. This is a great way to start dealing with affordable housing as well in a small way. Certainly, it will encourage more people to be able to provide that sort of housing.

I'm really proud to stand here and support this bill today, and I look forward to voting in support of it.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the member from Kenora–Rainy River, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the members from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Ottawa–Orléans, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Algoma–Manitoulin, Ottawa South and Barrie, especially the two engineers of that group who spoke in favour of this bill.

I've been an entrepreneur all my life. I've been in sales all my business life. I know one thing that you learn in sales: know when to stop selling. I will not speak any further to a winner.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Berardinetti assumes ballot item number 60 and Mr. Dickson assumes ballot item number 71.

MEDICAL RECORDS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should establish and enforce regulations pertaining to the Personal Health Information Act, 2004, subsection 54(11) with respect to fees charged for medical records, and ensure consistent billing for the Ontario harmonized sales tax.

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

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Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you again, Speaker. I'd like to start my presentation today by thanking a good lawyer. Roger Foisy of Mississauga first brought to my attention the Ontario Wild West of medical record fees and documented his concerns so thoroughly and accurately that there was no doubting either the issue or its need for resolution.

Roger is the kind of guy who gives lawyers a good name. Others, both patients and those acting on their behalf, have come forward in the past year to speak about their experiences as well.

I also need to acknowledge some special people on my staff. Much of the research for this resolution and what it could accomplish was done by my former legislative assistant, Jessica MacInnis, and I especially thank Jessica. Her successor, Cassandra George, finished the job for me and compiled much of the information to which I will refer. Cassandra is at home recovering from a recent accident, and from the floor of the Legislature, Cassandra, I thank you and I hope you're watching.

My executive assistant Andrzej Hoffmann made sure everybody stayed on task and met their deadlines. Thanks also go to my office staff: Humaira Hamayun—at home recovering from chemotherapy—Monika Duggal and Magnolia Ma.

The issue to be debated today concerns how much a doctor, clinic, therapist, pharmacy or other entity that holds a patient's medical records can charge that patient, or someone acting on behalf of the patient, for access to the patient's medical or health records. Professional colleges are too often either silent on the subject or vague if they have any guidelines on billing for medical records.

In March 2006, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care drafted a regulation to limit fees charged to a patient, or to his or her assigns, to a maximum of \$40 for all such records held by a provider. Though published in the Ontario Gazette, the regulation was neither adopted nor enforced.

The Ontario Medical Association publishes a Physician's Guide to Third Party and Other Uninsured Services, to provide OMA member doctors with what it calls "guidance" on uninsured and third party services, suggested fees, relevant policies and interpretation of regulations that govern the charging of fees for access to patient records. But like all other such voluntary standards, it is not mandatory. It means nothing in practice, and physicians and other holders of medical records are pretty much free to do whatever they want.

Fees to access medical records have become a lucrative revenue sideline for some doctors and others who have custody of a patient's health information. Note the word "custody." The health professional has already been paid, or has collected a fee, to provide the service and document the information. All that's been requested from them, most of the time, is a copy of what they already have, and if their practice is properly computerized, that information comes in the form of a query that is both quick and may often be very cheap to produce.

The OMA's guideline says physicians are prohibited from charging a fee without first giving an estimate of the fee. The OMA suggests \$30, plus 25 cents per page for each sheet above and beyond 20 pages. As well, a physician can ethically charge for out-of-pocket disbursements, if any are incurred, for shipment, long-distance faxing and other expenses of a similar nature. If, and only if, the physician must review the records before providing copies, may he or she bill at the normal hourly rate.

As written, that's reasonable; in practice, it's anything but. Let's provide a few egregious examples that set the stage for why the OMA, pharmacists, clinics, therapists and others have failed their patients and why this issue is on the floor of the Ontario Legislature.

I looked at a 2011 invoice to provide 29 pages of notes from a provider called ICC HealthNet. They billed \$350 for the service, plus HST. That's \$12.07 a page. And here's the galling part of it: The Canada Revenue Agency considers "the preparation and transfer of medical records" to be HST-exempt and GST-exempt too. In July 2013, CA firm Grant Thornton confirmed this.

So what's happening to the HST when it is billed to the patient? Is it being incorrectly remitted to the Canada Revenue Agency, or is it just being pocketed by the records provider? That, too, is likely all over the map.

Southdown Chiropractic in Mississauga charged \$120 for nine pages of records: \$13.33 a page. At least they didn't ding the poor patient for the HST. Neurologist Marvin Goldman of Scarborough charged \$125 for just five pages of medical records and notes: \$25 per page. In Brampton, family medicine practitioner Dr. Malar Gopinath billed \$150 for five pages of clinical notes and records: \$30 a page. Shoppers Drug Mart on Creditview Road in Mississauga billed \$100 for just three pages of notes and then wrongly added both GST and HST to the total. That's \$33.33, before taxes, per page.

How about this one? Oakville Plastic Surgery's Dr. Nancy de Kleer just last month hit up a patient \$500 for a five-page printout of records; that's \$100 a page. A

diagnostic clinic's 25-page printout cost \$190. A Scarborough doctor's six pages of records cost \$350.

The list of hundreds of these examples I've accumulated just goes on and on, and it has got to stop. Ontario's patients are not sheep to be shorn. The lawyers and insurance companies that act for those patients have to pass along these costs to their clients. Just as there is only one taxpayer, there is only one patient, who only has one chequebook.

We need the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to revisit this unproclaimed regulation, set an affordable and reasonable cap for the first 20 pages and set a fair per-page charge thereafter. We need the ministry to establish that where out-of-pocket disbursements are billed, they must be billed at actual cost and specify exactly what hourly rates can be billed for compiling this paperwork. If the compilation is done by staff, those hours must be billed at the staff rate, not the physician's rate.

We need this regulation to have some teeth, which means sanctions for gouging the patient and those acting on a patient's behalf. We also need an appeals process to the various colleges which, along with the OMA, have to become much more prescriptive about the practice of billing for medical records. And to be fair to health providers, we need clarity for physicians and other health providers on the tax status—or, in this case, the lack thereof—of billing for the transfer of medical records.

Ontario does, however, have at least one area of best practices to emulate. Hospitals appear to be the good actors in this little practice. Their very reasonable fees and expense recovery practices should be a good starting point for the ministry and for the various colleges.

In common law, a medical or hospital record is not owned by the patient, though the provider has been paid to compile and document that record. In several provinces, legislation and statutory regulations codify that while the record is owned by the entity that compiles it, a patient has a right of reasonable—which also means economical, timely and fair—access to those records.

Alberta's legislation and regulations set out, in concise and adequate detail, what is covered by medical records and what can be charged for access to them. Quebec prohibits charging a fee for access, though Quebec does allow what it terms a reasonable charge for transcription, reproduction and transmission of the information.

Nova Scotia's policies are embedded in legislation, which makes them harder to change with the times and technology, as information access prices should be falling. The legislation in Nova Scotia is quite specific, down to the amounts that can be billed to a patient or someone acting for that patient.

New Brunswick has possibly the right blend of the intent and the policy written into legislation, and the specifics and fees contained in regulation. If it were me, I would be modelling what Ontario ought to do on the Alberta and New Brunswick models.

Speaker, this issue does not need to go to committee, nor does it need any extensive public or stakeholder consultation. But what Ontario does need to do is to update,

proclaim and expand its regulation and enforce the regulation, and insist that the various professional colleges issue specific and helpful policies to their members.

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If necessary, Ontario needs a mechanism to go after the bad actors with a big-enough stick to recover inappropriate billings going back, let's say, two or three years, and to have strong-enough sanctions in place to give pause to any provider who forgets that he or she is in the patient treatment business and wants to view document production as a lucrative profit centre.

Speaker, I thank you for your time to bring to the Legislature an issue that I found to be disturbing. I tend to assume the best of the people who provide us care. We realize that when we go in to see a health service provider, we are very much in their hands. When the time comes to recover the information that the provider has generated on our behalf, it had been my assumption that this would be done in a transparent, timely and economical fashion. I was unpleasantly surprised to discover that this is not so.

I would hope that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will pay attention to the proceedings of the debate this afternoon, and proclaim and enforce a regulation that will bring clarity to this process.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to rise today and give my two cents to this debate on the motion for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to enforce its own regulations.

I will concur that there is a problem in the system. As a pharmacist, I saw it—daily, in fact. Lawyers involved in lawsuits, mainly with auto insurance, would send me a letter saying, "I'd like a profile of so-and-so patient with the proper consent forms sent with it. Please send your bill along with the papers."

The first time I received one such letter, I called the lawyer and said, "We've never charged for this service. What do you mean, 'Send a bill'?" They said, "You can bill us whatever price you want. It doesn't matter, because we'll just take that money and charge it to the consumer, or whatever comes out at the end of the day." I was really quite shocked at the fact that they didn't care what we billed. It was a learning experience for me.

A lot of the pharmacies that I know of in our area don't really charge for this service problem going on.

It is a problem, though, with our medical practitioners who are leaving town. Elgin-Middlesex-London has a huge shortage of doctors in our area, and when they leave town for various reasons, they tend to always head to the Toronto area. Patients are left with a notice saying, "Please contact this outsourced company that's holding the records"—and to get that record for the patient, they have to pay a fee. I'm sure that because of the patients that these doctors are caring for when they do leave and because of the shortage—for them to themselves handle the fact of disseminating their records, they of course put in a third party, which probably increases the fee that they are charging.

On average, a few years ago it was about \$200 a patient to get their records from the doctor. So it is a hardship for patients who do come in. They want their medical records as soon as possible, because they have to go to the local walk-in clinic or emergency department for a renewal on their prescription, because, as I said, there are no doctors in our area, coming to St. Thomas or Elgin county. The fact that they don't really have the money to pay upfront begs the question—they always ask, "Well, whose records are these, anyway? Are they mine? Are they the doctor's?" So I think that's a good discussion to have.

The fact that this motion has come forward to discuss a regulation that's already in place begs the question of, why isn't the Minister of Health doing her job and actually proclaiming that regulation and having her staff go ahead and do it? I don't know why someone in her own caucus can't walk over to her and say, "This is a problem in our province," and have the Minister of Health proclaim that regulation and do her job. There are two members in this House sitting here—Etobicoke North and Oak Ridges—Markham—who probably would do a fine job as Minister of Health, and I'm sure they would have proclaimed that regulation, had Mr. Delaney offered that suggestion to them, if they were Minister of Health.

I just want to throw this plug in: As there are discussions going on of problems that are occurring in the health care system, I do think it's time for the government to review its Ontario drug benefit reimbursement policy. You're seeing it more and more, with Avastin; there's the drug Esbriet—there are so many new medications coming into the marketplace with a high cost, because science and technology have really increased and we're now producing medications and treating diseases that we never thought could ever be treated before, with a high cost.

The current system is dated. We need to relook at how these new medications will be reimbursed, because there are too many people going without at a higher cost than paying for their medical records.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm rising today to speak to this notice of motion from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville around the issue of medical files and how you get medical files from your physicians when they retire or how you get medical records from a number of places when you need them, perhaps to apply for Ontario disability support or Ontario Works. The problem is that there is no consistency in the process or in the pricing.

But my first question is, I don't understand why a government member is calling upon their own government in a motion to do something. Just do it. It doesn't take this House to change a regulation, so why isn't the government just doing this?

This issue has been on the books since 2006. For all these years, people have been paying huge amounts of money for files—

Ms. Catherine Fife: To private medical companies.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —to private medical companies, to warehouses that are warehousing files when physicians

perhaps suddenly leave due to illness or some other reason. I've got stories that I can tell you that go back to 2006, just from the records that my staff pulled.

I have called upon the government—actually, before I was even sworn in, my first official duty was calling upon the Minister of Health to deal with this issue, because a physician in my riding left 1,800 patients without a physician. All of them were scurrying to get their records.

I had a woman—Vivian was her name—and actually, it was my own family doctor, so this is kind of interesting, because I just happened to have a visit to my family doctor before she retired. She said she was retiring, and I said, "Oh, good. Okay, that's fine. So what's the process?" And they said, "You just have to sign this form. We'll give you your file." They didn't even copy it. "Here's your file. Take it with you to your new doctor. Who's going to be your doctor?" I said, "Okay. It's going to be my husband's doctor." He had a different doctor than I did.

It was so simple. There was no payment; there was no reason for a payment. I just got my file and I took it to the next doctor—end of story.

Yet this Vivian tells me that when she went to get her file, of course, the doctor's office was already closed. Her file had been transferred to a physician who wasn't going to be her physician but who was kind of looking after these files. From Vivian, they wanted \$35 plus another, I don't know, \$1.45 or \$1.55 a page. They wanted \$435 from Vivian for the same file transfer that cost me zero.

These issues have been going on for seven years; they continue to go on. The response that I got from Minister Matthews, the Minister of Health, at the time was, "Well, yes, we understand that these issues are out there, but we're going to tell you to refer your constituent to the privacy commissioner, and maybe she can do something about this." That's the rhetoric that we get.

This is a very simple issue. All you have to do is pass some regulation. I don't really know why you would waste your slot, as a government member, calling upon your own government to do something.

We hear regulations get changed every day in this place. In fact, a lot of them, we don't even ever know about. Regulations change, and a year later, we'll find out from somebody, "Oh, well, the government changed that regulation." They didn't notify any of us that they changed it, but in fact they did.

I don't know why the member can't just walk across the floor to the minister and say, "Minister, have your cabinet, or your council of cabinet, go and do the right thing."

I have a story about a nurse that I represented when I was working for the Ontario Nurses' Association. I was doing her LTD appeal. As I was reviewing that file, I found that she was missing about 12 years, when I was trying to tell her story to get her benefits reinstated. I had to go and find that file in a warehouse somewhere, and they charged me \$1,800 to get that piece of this nurse's file. She didn't have any money. Thankfully, she had a

union that had some money, and her union, the Ontario Nurses' Association, went out and paid \$1,800 for that file so that I could complete the LTD appeal and actually get that woman's benefits reinstated.

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I just say, at the end of this, I think it's very important that you just change the regulation and you forget about the motion. Let's just get this done for the people who live in this province who are struggling day to day. They don't need to be paying \$400 and \$500 and \$800 and \$1,800 for medical records that are all about them. It's compromising people's ability to get ODSP. It's compromising people's ability to get Ontario Works, because the first thing they ask you for is that medical file; that's what you need to get that. So you have people out there in shelters, waiting to get their ODSP because they can't get their medical file because they don't have any money to pay for that file. It's ridiculous—and you know what? You're the government. You need to get on with doing this one little task. It shouldn't take years and years to do this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly very pleased to support the motion brought forward by my colleague the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. Obviously, I also share the need for us to move forward in this particular regard, and there's nothing better than collective action. This is really an opportunity for all of us to get together the way our constituents would want us to. I certainly look forward to the successful passage of this particular motion, which, obviously, I support.

A number of bodies have expressed their opinions on what sorts of charges should be levied in terms of the transfer of personal medical records from one health custodian to another, but the fact is that currently, the Personal Health Information Protection Act, or PHIPA, has no fee schedule. In fact, it was in 2008, when I was a member of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, that we reviewed PHIPA. We were informed at that time—it was a number of years ago—by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that they had published in the Ontario Gazette in 2006 a fee for accessing medical records, which has a base of \$30, with a few prescribed additional costs allowable.

We do know that that particular regulation proposed was never adopted. I can only assume it was an oversight, because clearly, something is necessary. So essentially, there is no regulation that currently exists.

We did hear back in 2008 from the ARCH Disability Law Centre about the impact that high fees can have on individuals with disabilities, who often have limited income and lengthy medical records. During the committee hearing, I in fact asked a question of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care about the concerns raised by ARCH. I was informed by the ministry that they needed to do a certain amount of education of all stakeholders as to the proposed regulation.

The committee did, in fact, feel strongly that there should be a regulation that sets fees charged by health information custodians for the disclosure of personal health information. However, unfortunately, that recommendation was not adopted.

With regard to physicians, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario does stipulate that fees should be charged in the amounts prescribed by the regulation—that we know does not exist—or the amount of reasonable cost recovery; and further, physicians are encouraged to consider the patient's financial circumstances and ability to pay when determining the appropriate fee.

There is also, as has already been discussed, the OMA physician's guide for uninsured services. As my colleague detailed, this does include a potential fee for professional review to be billed at the physician's hourly rate. It's clearly the latter part of that formula that has been a problem.

In October 2010, the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office reviewed a complaint where a physician charged a patient \$125 for their medical records. When the Information and Privacy Commissioner compared the OMA's method to the proposed regulation by the Ministry of Health, it found that, under those proposed regulations, the charge should have been \$33.50.

It's time—certainly more than time—that we act on this. Hopefully the collective wisdom of this House will persuade the appropriate action to take place.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to join in the debate here on the proposal put forward by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

It's interesting how passionately members of the government caucus can argue in favour of a position that has been put forward many times. In fact, the last time in this place that I recall that a private member's bill was put forward on this very issue was from a former Minister of Health, Mr. David Caplan. It was a private member's bill put forward in September 2010. His private member's bill actually went far beyond what this member is proposing, because Mr. Caplan proposed that there should be no fees. He argued that these are the medical records of patients; they are their records and, quite frankly, if they need them for whatever purpose, they should be delivered. That was David Caplan.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: What happened to David Caplan?

Mr. Frank Klees: What happened to David Caplan?

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: He's no longer here. Minister of Health—he got thrown under the bus; that's what happened, and he's no doubt watching this. He, today, if he wants his medical records, has to pay for them.

Here is what one Dalton McGuinty said when he was asked—this is on May 17, 2011. Dalton McGuinty said this about whether or not people should have to pay for their medical records: "I'm just saying nothing more and nothing less than what I said." How about that? Dalton McGuinty. Where's Dalton McGuinty today? Where is

he on this important issue? I can tell you—probably one of the most brilliant statements that a Premier of this province has ever made.

I'll tell you this: This member, with all due respect—I have the greatest regard for the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, but let's listen to what Ann Cavoukian had to say. This is our privacy commissioner. This goes back to May 17, 2011, as well. This is not news that we're debating this here. What's news—actually, it's not news—is that we're debating old stuff that should have been dealt with years ago; even the privacy commissioner said, “By the way, you've got a problem here.”

Here is what the privacy commissioner said should be charged, if anything at all. This was someone who was going to be charged \$350 for their medical records, and Cavoukian's office revised the fee to \$33.50: \$30 for the first 20 pages, including about 15 minutes of time for a doctor to review the information, and 25 cents thereafter.

That is from our own privacy commissioner. The member wants to have a little more discussion about what should be charged; it's all here. Here's my position. It's private members' business, so I'm speaking for myself; I'm not speaking for anyone else. I don't believe there should be one cent charged for my medical records. They're my medical records, and if I want them I should have them.

As far as I'm concerned, the member is way off base. He's just part of the big conspiracy to continue to charge people for things they shouldn't be charged for. Tax-and-spend Liberals: That's all they are. Look, let's clean it up. You have a medical record. It's yours. You want it? Make a phone call, and you get it; no charges.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a pleasure to be able to support this motion today, I have to say, but I find it incredible, like others, that we need to have this motion. There's a problem here with respect to fees being paid and charged for medical records, because there are no rules about how much Ontarians must have to pay to get copies of their own medical records.

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You know, we've heard it several times in this House, and it makes absolute sense: Why would a person have to pay for their own medical records when the doctors of this province are already being paid a fee through our OHIP system? It just does not make sense that this is happening. But I'm happy that it's here before us and the discussion is happening, because we need to do something to move this forward.

Among other things, the maximum amount of fees a custodian can charge an individual for providing access to personal health records is prescribed, but for some reason, they chose not to enforce it—we were already addressing this very issue back in 2006. That decision has had a serious impact on the people who need those records, often people who don't have the money to pay for them. I have some stories from constituents in my riding of Hamilton Mountain.

Rick came into my office. He's an injured worker who doesn't have a union to represent him with the WSIB. He was appealing a decision of the WSIB, but how can he be expected to do that when he cannot afford his file? He can't work due to his injury, he has no income, and he's in a no-win situation because he cannot get access to his records.

Heather is a senior citizen. Her doctor retired, and the doctor's patients were not transferred to another doctor. She needs medication but has been unable to find another doctor, so she has to go to a walk-in clinic. But her file cannot be transferred without her paying for it. As a senior on a fixed income, she finds it difficult to make ends meet at the best of times, without this extra expense.

Tommy Douglas built a health care system in Saskatchewan that would ensure that every person was guaranteed access to health care that they needed, no matter how much money they had. What Tommy built was copied all across Canada, and the federal government set about building a public health care system that put patient care first, that didn't turn people away because they couldn't afford it. It was something we were all proud of, something we would point to and know that it set us apart from our neighbours to the south. But now we are losing that, little by little, bit by bit. Too often we hear about health care not being fully accessible to people with low incomes because of increases to user fees.

I've already spoken about people who can't get the care they need because they can't afford the fees to access their records. Another example would be parking fees, which are a problem, not just in remote areas, but in urban areas. Often, people who need health care are not fit enough to walk any distance or take public transit, and they need to drive or be driven. But the parking fees at hospitals can sometimes be outrageous amounts that people can't afford. I say “sometimes be outrageous amounts,” because those fees vary all across the province. Again, there's no consistency. It's the same for fees that are being charged for access to people's records: There's no consistency across this province, there's no consistency across health providers and there's no consistency across clinical settings.

This motion to establish and enforce regulations with respect to fees charged for medical records would fix that, for setting maximums and consistent billings. It wouldn't eliminate the fees, which is unfortunate, but it would be a step in the right direction.

As I said at the start, it's a pity that we need to have this discussion, and it seems to me that the government recognized the problem years ago, moved to fix it but then dropped it. Yes, there is a section of the Personal Health Information Protection Act that says a fee should not exceed “the amount of reasonable cost recovery.” We all know that “reasonable” is open to interpretation. What we end up with are wildly different views of what that is, and that is not responsible. So we have no standard fee, and that's a problem we're trying to fix.

I'm happy to support this motion, but my expectation of it actually changing anything is, unfortunately, very

limited. The government does not need to act on this motion even if it has unanimous consent of this House. It will be interesting to see how many members across the floor will vote in favour of their colleague the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, because they can fix it, but will they?

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I rise in support of my honourable colleague Bob Delaney, Mississauga–Streetsville MPP, in my capacity as a physician as well as a parliamentarian. I would commend him for attempting to bring some equity, some clarity, some transparency and accountability to this whole issue of physicians transferring medical records, whether it's to another physician, another clinic, out of country, across the globe or to another institution for treatment.

I would say there's probably a number of aspects that we must consider. As has been mentioned, physicians are the custodians, but patients are the ultimate owners of their record. Having said that, there are some very stringent rules with the College of Physicians and Surgeons that, for example, doctors must not only document well and document sort of in real time, but they're custodians even after the patient leaves their practice for, I think, up to 10 years. So there is a certain administrative burden, especially if you've been in practice 10, 20 years-plus, whether it's in terms of storage or filing systems. Then, of course, what often happens is one to two years later or, let's say, several months after the patient has left or is seeking higher care elsewhere, say in a tertiary or quaternary centre, we have to actually go and retrieve those records. So it's not a simple matter where the particular record in question is sitting in the physician's drawer, they just open that drawer and hand it over.

I think it is reasonable, for example, to follow the Ontario Medical Association guidelines in their physician's guide to uninsured services. Before I mention what their particular numbers are, what I might just add is that if you really want to bring some equity, maybe we should approach the Ministry of Health and have this become an insured service where the actual number is specified, codified and based on a per-page basis, and we can agree upon that particular fee.

The other thing I might just add as well is that often it's not just a matter of "Here's your key 70 pages or 170 pages of your life." Often, for example, the doctor is asked to write a summary sheet of what is going on because no receiving clinic, be it for cancer care, rehabilitation care, WSIB—they don't want to read those 170 pages, I can assure you. They would much prefer having a physician give a one- or two-page summary, and that is often as part of this fee.

For example, let's say it's a patient of 10 years. That's a pretty thick file, obviously depending on the number of illnesses, the number of interactions, tests ordered, CT scans, MRIs, consult notes from other specialists and so on. That could easily reach 200, 300, 400 pages, and if

the physician is obligated to, first of all, go through that, write a summary sheet—these are the key issues. These are, by the way, the list of medications. These are allergies. These are some treatment options that have been tried previously that did not work. Here are things that have actually led to negative reactions. Oh, by the way, here was a depression episode, be careful, and so on—little warnings to the future treating team. That, of course, involves the physician's due diligence, time, effort, blood, sweat, tears. I think, when the physician is busy practising medicine, they really don't want to be having this kind of administrative burden, so it's only fair that there should be some compensation involved.

Hippocrates, the father of medicine, 5th century BC, Greece, said, "Life is short, the art so long." Well, along with the art being so long, occasionally medical records are as well. It's not uncommon to have medical records which are now sitting in the physician's offices as tomes, as volumes, now in volume 3. And as was rightly mentioned, sometimes those anterior records, foregoing records of let's say five or 10 years, are off-site. So the physician is then obligated to have an external agency or one of those storage facilities actually house those medical records.

There are many, many moving parts to this. It's not just a simple issue of "Here's the record. I'm not giving it to you unless you give me an egregious fee. It's sitting in my drawer. Otherwise, you're welcome to it."

The other thing I would just mention is that, as I mentioned, the Ontario Medical Association has a very well-thought-out physician's guide to uninsured services. Again, it's a guideline. Some physicians will bill less and some physicians will bill more.

1700

Of course, the point of the guideline is that it should be within one to two standard deviations, meaning not a big outlier where a patient, as was mentioned earlier by my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville, is being charged ridiculous sums for a 10-page report. But it says something like \$30 for the first 20 pages and 25 cents per page afterward. There may be some other administrative costs. For example, if a secretary has to take, let's say, 20 minutes or half an hour, there may be a cost to that tacked on. If there's a summary letter that the physician is required to create from a new cognitive interaction with the file, that is also, presumably, a billable expense.

Having said that, I think it is very commendable that my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville, as I said earlier, brings some accountability, equity and transparency to this entire portfolio. As was mentioned, we probably ought to revisit some of our own existing regulations and update them, at least with the cost-of-living allowance built in, inflation etc., with medical records.

Just before closing, I might say that most of this stuff might go away if we all moved to an EMR, an electronic medical record, where we can probably push a button or hand over the entire file on a memory key. Thanks for the memories.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm fairly certain I'm not going to be able to match the comments that were made a few moments ago by my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora, but I am happy to have the opportunity to make a few comments of my own.

I certainly am in favour of the resolution that has been brought forward by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, but like many of the previous speakers, I find it rather curious that we're really even having to debate this. This should be done simply by regulation; it should be handled internally. But like a lot of things that go on around here at Queen's Park that seem to be no-brainers, as they say, for some reason things don't happen. I get stakeholders that come to see me on a regular basis and they'll say, "It's so obvious this should be done." Well, nothing is really obvious around here, I guess. So I hope this does happen as a result of the debate today and that we are able to move this forward.

What we've been talking about is that the resolution speaks about the Personal Health Information Protection Act, subsection 54(11), that talks about how "The amount of the fee shall not exceed the prescribed amount or the amount of reasonable cost recovery, if no amount is prescribed." Of course, we're dealing with a situation where there is no regulation, and we're certainly hearing a lot of stories from patients across the province that the fees being charged are not being charged on a reasonable cost-recovery basis. Some patients are being charged exorbitant fees of upwards of \$20 to \$50 per page.

The member from Etobicoke North was speaking about having \$30 for the first 20 pages and something like 25 cents per page thereafter. That seems reasonable and in line with what the Information and Privacy Commissioner has said. I think there should also be a provision for those people who are unable to pay those fees—people who are on ODSP, for example. We should be cognizant of the fact that even that amount is too much for people to pay.

I think it's not unrealistic or unreasonable that there should be some cost recovery, because it does cost to photocopy these documents. If there are summaries and so on that have to be prepared, I certainly understand that. But it has to be reasonable, and I think that's what we're talking about here—especially for patient recovery. In my role previous to being elected here, as a lawyer doing some work in the personal injury area, there was always a history of charging for the production of medical records from doctors' offices, but it was always on a very nominal, cost-per-page basis. We certainly don't want to see exorbitant amounts being passed along to the people who are ultimately going to be recovering amounts in lawsuits and so on. It just jacks up the cost to all of us.

The other issue that we're dealing with here is the fact that some people are also not being charged HST. In cases where there are fees being charged, we need to make sure that if fees are going to be charged, HST is charged consistently across the board.

In closing—I know there's not very much time left and there's another speaker—I would certainly concur

with what the member from Etobicoke North has said to indicate that having a properly functioning system of electronic medical records would do away with a lot of the issues that we're facing here. I would urge the government to get on with it.

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: It gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of my residents of Don Valley East on this motion. I want to thank the member for his advocacy on this issue and bringing this important issue forward, protecting the rights not only of constituents from his riding but people throughout the province of Ontario.

The issue here is pretty simple: When a caregiver, a patient, a family, employers, lawyers or anyone attempts to retrieve documents pertaining to medical records, they are usually charged a fee by a clinic, a doctor or a pharmacy. The problem is, these fees vary. We did hear from different members about the different regulation that's there, and the fact that it needs to be enforced. There needs to be some more clarity.

As I was researching this issue I found an interesting story in the *Globe and Mail* about a lady from Thunder Bay who was recently charged \$600 for her medical records, which I thought was really an extreme price to charge. I know that it's not all doctors, clinics and pharmacies that are charging these numbers; for my doctor, when I transferred doctors, it was about a \$40 fee.

I think that some standardization would be a great thing for this province. In fact, as I was reading more and doing a bit more research, I came across an article from the *Law Times*. It was interesting. It's from January 2012. It was talking about how pharmacists were charging, for one-page prescriptions, \$75 to \$150, which I think was obviously a bit too much for one page.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about how, as we currently go further into the digital age and we embed our society more into the digital age, I think there will be more opportunity to make this process much easier. In fact, since 2005, we've gone from just under one million people on digital health records to nearly nine million. By 2015, every person in Ontario will be on a digital medical record, which will make it easier for the transfer of data between patients and doctors.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am pleased to see how many people had such interesting and helpful things to say.

To my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London: I want to thank him for his suggestions on how this issue affects patients in smaller centres, and for discussing what happens when your doctor moves.

To my colleague from Welland: Sometimes it does take a debate in the Legislature to light a fire under the Ministry of Health bureaucrats and staff. We have developed this resolution in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, and now I think this debate will empower and prod them to take action with our impending approval of this resolution.

To my colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham: She points out that, as a physician, she too ran into the inertia of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and shared some of my feelings that, as members, this is the way we empower ourselves, and this is the way we as members act in government.

To my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora: I'm going to have to watch that Conservative bus. I really don't know how it's going to get into first gear with all the bodies the PC Party seems to have thrown under it. My thanks to a borrow-and-spend Conservative for his comments.

To my colleague from Hamilton Mountain: There is a very clear and consistent body of law and jurisprudence that concludes that the medical record is the property of the health provider, which is why we are discussing fair, timely and affordable access to the record contents by the patient.

To my colleague from Etobicoke North: He points out the day-to-day reality of the task of producing a record, from the perspective of an MD who deals with this issue personally. His Hansard, I think, will be very valuable to the ministry.

I very much agree with my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa that it's obvious that something must be done. The insight provided here deals with the what, when and how.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 55, standing in the name of Mr. Crack.

Mr. Crack has moved private member's notice of motion number 48. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

1710

ONTARIO FORESTRY INDUSTRY REVITALIZATION ACT (HEIGHT OF WOOD FRAME BUILDINGS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA REVITALISATION DE L'INDUSTRIE FORESTIÈRE DE L'ONTARIO (HAUTEUR DES BÂTIMENTS À OSSATURE DE BOIS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Fedeli has moved second reading of Bill 13, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to the height of wood frame buildings.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I think I heard a couple of noes.

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

All those opposed to the notion, 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): Mr. Fedeli.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: SCOFEA, please, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance. Agreed? Agreed.

MEDICAL RECORDS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Delaney has moved private member's notice of motion number 47.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 5, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le ramassage des déchets.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: This is an interesting bill. It's certainly full of some interesting possibilities.

It's a great sleight of hand that the Liberals are pulling here. They claim they're taking steps to actually meet our demands to scrap eco taxes, but they're actually attempting to force businesses to bury these expensive levies in the cost of their products or to display them on price tags instead of receipts. So it's even harder; it's less transparent and less open. We hear so much about transparency and openness from this government, yet we don't see much action on it.

What they don't want you to know, Speaker, is that Bill 91 continues each and every eco tax program. That means that Ontario consumers still have to pay eco taxes on tires, electronics, and household hazardous materials like paint cans and batteries. The only difference will be a higher price or an eco tax displayed on the price tag in the store itself, on the store shelf instead of the receipt at the cash register. This isn't change. It's a shell game, and we see a lot of these from this government, a lot of shell games to ensure all the Liberals' eco tax revenue will continue to be funneled into the recycling bureaucracy, which costs Ontario consumers hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

It is interesting that they seem frustrated that we actually want to debate and talk about this bill a little bit. I've had numerous employers in my own riding, chief among them Coca-Cola, which is a very large employer in Barrie, that are very concerned about what this will cost their business and the effect it will have on their ability to employ people in my riding.

Special-interest groups have been pressuring members of this House to stop debating this bill. I got elected to come here and do exactly that: come and debate these bills and represent the interests of my constituents, the local businesses and the local workers in my economy who need these jobs.

This can cost a lot of jobs in almost all of our ridings. We can't stop representing the voices of our constituents in the democratic process. I'm certainly not going to do that and I've never stood down from representing the interests of my constituents in this House. That's what we were sent here to do. In fact, one of the tenets of parliamentary democracy is the ability to represent our constituents to the best of our ability and to be their voice here in this House.

We know that this bill will create half a billion dollars in new costs for businesses that produce certain materials, including Coca-Cola. Like I said, it has quite a large bottling facility in my riding. If this bill passes, how many people in my riding are going to lose their jobs? How many people in all of your ridings are going to lose their jobs as a direct result of this bill going through?

I don't think it has been thought out well enough. I think this is just another shell game, window-dressing type bill that sounds good but really isn't going to accomplish what it needs to accomplish. In fact, it's going to destroy jobs along the way. That's not good enough. I think my constituents deserve an answer. They deserve an answer from this government, and they deserve it today. Frankly, they deserve it as soon as possible.

Without telling the public, in fact, I think the Liberals actually raised the eco tax on big-screen TVs earlier this year by more than 40%, bringing the total levy to \$40.

The Liberals also targeted Ontario's hard-working farmers with massive tire tax hikes this year. I've heard this from numerous members in this House who have a farming background themselves. In fact, the environment minister himself raised the eco tax on John Deere combine tires to \$823 each, up from 92 bucks. These are people who are looking to make a living. It's already difficult enough for many of our farmers to provide all of you with the food that you eat every day. And then we are going to hit them with a tire tax on their tractors that is so exorbitant? It's not a jobs plan. This is killing jobs.

Still, without a real plan for the economy—and we saw that today. I think they recognized there's a problem—at least that's what we got out of it—and you need to build our economy. That's about all I heard from the minister today: "Let's build the economy." Well, I think we agree with you on that. But really, the question is, how are you going to do it? Are you going to do it by raising taxes secretly? Are you going to do it by creating all these different shell games and nice window dressing?

You know what? People aren't buying it anymore. You've had 10 years to fix it. You haven't done it. It's time to get down to business.

You claimed that continuing eco taxes—don't mind the cost of the Blue Box Program—creating new taxes for Ontario consumers will lead to more jobs. Really? You can't tax your way into jobs. You can't spend your way into jobs either, which is what you seem to be intent on doing. It truly is sad to see that the best jobs strategy this government can come up with is taking a full half a billion dollars out of Ontario's manufacturing sector every year in order to subsidize a few green jobs. This is the same risky economic theory the Liberals used for the Green Energy Act, which we know has completely collapsed and is causing more problems, costing more jobs than we even thought it would, Speaker. It's going to cost this province thousands of manufacturing jobs, and this on top of it is just—it seems like there's no sense of reality about what's really going on out there.

Still, for some reason, the Liberals actually think that to create jobs in the recycling industry, they need to revert back to the same risky economic theory and kill even more jobs in Ontario's manufacturing sector, which we need to come back in ridings like mine.

Barrie, I know, used to have a very vibrant blue-collar industry. We used to have several plants, whether it was General Tire or whether it was Molson—many people enjoyed Molson Park over the years. It's no longer there. It's an empty field. I think I mentioned General Tire. Tambrands used to be there. Bombardier used to be there. They're all gone—all gone for low-paying retail jobs, and it has all happened in the last 10 years.

What's even worse is the NDP supports the Liberals' reckless plan to saddle Ontario's manufacturing sector with another half a billion dollars in costs because it sounds nice, even at the price of killing good jobs in factories in cities like Hamilton and London and Kitchener and Barrie. This is unacceptable. It's unacceptable. The government shouldn't sacrifice jobs in one sector to create them in another. We've seen this happen on a number of different occasions. The horse racing industry might even be a great example of that, as well. It should create the right conditions for economic growth.

Governments don't really create jobs, do they? Governments create the environment that jobs are created within. We need to enable our employers to be the employers that have 20—it's great to see the employers that have five, 10, 15 people today be the employers that have 100 people tomorrow and the next year and the next year, instead of placing in front of them impediments like taxes that are getting hidden here and there and all over the place, and not being really truthful with them. It's hard for a new business person.

By the way, almost 75% of all the people who are employed in Ontario are employed by businesses with four or less employees. So, really, small business is big business in Ontario. These are the people that these sorts of fees really affect. These are the people that are going to be the employers of tomorrow.

I know that Moore Packaging in Barrie now employs 400 to 500 people. It started in a garage with two people, a husband-and-wife team.

Southmedic started with a nurse who had a great idea for disposable medical instruments, and now they've parlayed that into one of the only companies worldwide that can provide disposable medical instruments for the medical industry.

These are the businesses we need to encourage and help grow. Things like these eco fees are just one example of many hidden fees and regulations and costly impediments to businesses' growth. We need to do more to help them grow.

I think the reason the Liberals want to force half a billion dollars in new costs on Ontario consumers is to grow the size and power of the government's unaccountable recycling agency, Waste Diversion Ontario. This Bill 91 gives this agency the power to impose new taxes on Ontario's manufacturing sector and dictate how much each business will have to pay for its recycling. This is wrong. Real job creation is not the result of new costs and bureaucracy; it's the result of setting the right conditions for economic growth.

We put forward a bold plan last November to create jobs in the recycling industry without sacrificing Ontario's manufacturing sector. We would start by scrapping the Liberal eco tax programs, eliminating the government's useless recycling bureaucracy, and we believe businesses should do their part to recover the recycling materials into new products. But rather than create a complicated bureaucracy and massive new costs for consumers, we would simply create the right conditions for economic growth. Let's lay that groundwork for those small businesses to be the ones that can create the best jobs and economy that we can and that we have the potential for doing in Ontario.

Speaker, because of the frustration and the lack of organization that this government seems to be able to have as far as creating jobs and not giving us a plan, in the spirit of that, I move to adjourn debate.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1722 to 1752.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have members take their seats, please.

Mr. Jackson has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 23.

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

Questions and comments.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Speaker, as we all know, this group of pages who have served so well for the last three weeks have now completed their tenure here at Queen's Park. I want to express my appreciation on behalf of the people of Wellington–Halton Hills—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd advise the member it's not a point of order.

Questions and comments.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, on this particular bill we've had 14 hours of debate to date, and I think that 52 members have spoken on the bill. I've enjoyed listening to some of the debate that has taken place. It's an important part of the process. I think a very significant part of the process, in this case, is going to be the movement towards the committee.

I have spoken to many people who have views on this who are looking forward to public hearings, which are usually part of the committee process, and others who are looking forward to clause-by-clause analysis of the bill and also looking forward to the presentation of amendments that they believe, in their mind, could strengthen this piece of legislation.

You're always going to find some people who are in opposition to particular bills if they think that it's going to impact them in one way or another, and that's understandable. But I think it would be important now not to engage in the bell ringing which, over the years, people have engaged in.

I was just chatting with one of my colleagues on the other side and talking about how irrelevant it makes the place seem and how irrelevant the place becomes when you engage in games of bell ringing.

At least I'll say this: As much as I think we have had a fulsome debate on this particular bill, at least when people are speaking to the bill, they are engaging, I think, constructively in the legislative process.

What has happened now is, we're getting the game playing, "bell ringing," as it's called, tying up half an hour of the time of members when we could be having others who might well want to speak this afternoon on the debate.

I hope the Legislature does not deteriorate, as it has from time to time, into a circumstance where we have nothing but bell ringing and the debate is put aside.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you and thank the member from Barrie for giving an elaborate speech on the merits, or lack thereof, of Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act.

The member raises a number of important points that merit discussion in this Legislature. I notice that the Minister of the Environment did say that 52 members of this Legislature have had the opportunity to speak to Bill 91, and I'm waiting to hear from the 54 remaining speakers on what they might have to say about this particular piece of legislation.

It's an important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Ontario Community Newspapers Association, for example, is very concerned about the effect that Bill 91 is going to have on their particular industry. We know it's a very challenging moment in the media market. Our community newspapers, whether they're in Cambridge, Hamilton Mountain or in other places around the province of Ontario, are feeling the crunch as it is. The reality of it is that we need to be very careful and judicious about the kinds of legislation that pass through this place.

I believe fundamentally, Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity here to talk about Bill 91. Ultimately, what members of the PC caucus have been saying, time and time again—we're still waiting for the economic plan to be produced by this government. Despite the fact that they produced an economic statement that was full of holes, we still don't have an idea of how they're going to create jobs in the province of Ontario. They're going to run this province aground by adding billions upon billions of dollars to our debt that's going to crush future growth in the province of Ontario. I think Ontarians deserve to stand against that.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: It's sort of confusing to people out there. I heard the member from Barrie stand up and say, "We have the right to stand up and speak in debate, and we should debate." Then he moves adjournment of the debate, and he moves for 30 minutes of bell ringing. I wish he could explain that—if he'd get up on his feet and explain the logic of that.

Sure, we all agree we should be debating this important bill. I don't see how ringing bells—is that the Tory way of debating: ringing bells? If you have something important to say, relevant about this bill, say it. Don't ring the bells for 30 minutes.

The thing that's happening here, obviously, is that the Conservative opposition don't want this to go to committee, because at committee you will bring in the public and hear from the people of Ontario about this legislation which affects people in every community—in the north, in the big cities, in the small cities.

The work of government is to take care of issues like waste management, which is a problem; we've all agreed. Let's bring the people from all our communities who have something relevant—I want to hear from these people from Kitchener, from Markham—

Interjection: Ajax.

Mr. Mike Colle:—from Ajax especially. I want to let them come here and invite them to the committee, but the Conservatives, instead of wanting to hear from people, want to hear the bells ring. So for 30 minutes we sat here listening to bells ring when we could have been hearing from constituents from York South–Weston, from Etobicoke North and from Trinity–Spadina. They're dying to come here to speak to this bill, and the member from

Barrie had the gall to say, "No, I'd rather hear the bells ring than hear the people from Trinity–Spadina come and speak to this bill." Let the people speak to this bill—

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: The official opposition is needlessly extending debate on Bill 91 by continuing to put up speakers. The bill has now been debated for more than 13 hours. Fifty-one members of the Legislature have already spoken to this bill. Despite the leader of the official opposition's pledge to clear the decks, his party is tying up the legislation once again.

I'm calling on the opposition to stop stalling and help us pass this job-creating bill.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: As I mentioned before, Speaker, this bill actually has quite an impact on my riding, and I'm very proud to be able to have the opportunity to stand up here and talk to you about how I think it's going to cost jobs, not just in my riding. I think all of us need to take a look and see how this is actually going to cost this economy jobs, not build jobs.

Bill 91 is really nothing more than the Liberals' desperate attempt to change the channel on their failure to increase waste diversion. We haven't seen any real attempt to have waste diversion here. In 2008, the Liberals promised to achieve a 60% waste diversion rate. Five years later, that rate is still stalled at 23%—a pretty dismal failure, I'd say. This bill does nothing to accomplish that goal. The reason is, the Liberals have ignored Ontario's largest source of waste. As a result, they've actually allowed recycling to drop at factories, shopping malls and government buildings. The industrial, commercial and institutional sector accounts for 60% of Ontario's waste—60%. Yet the Liberals allowed recycling to decrease in this sector from 19% to 12%.

You've got to put your money where your mouth is, here. Instead of showing leadership on waste diversion, the Liberals have spent all their time running massive eco tax schemes for tires, electronics and household hazardous materials, which together only make up 3% of the province's waste. You know what? You've got to do more than window dressing here. You actually need to try to achieve something. This bill does nothing to achieve waste diversion; it does nothing to fix the environment—another example of many, of a shell game and great window dressing: something that sounds good but achieves absolutely nothing.

It's time to get it done. It's time to actually stand up and do the job rather than just talk about it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday, November 18, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
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Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
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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 civiques 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	
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Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

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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	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister 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
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Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
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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
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	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	
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Vacant	Niagara Falls	

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Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
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Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
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Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
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John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
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Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
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Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
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sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
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